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Marxism Today

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Editorial office
16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY
Telephone 01-251 4406

Editor Martin Jacques

Editorial board
Irene Brennan, Jack Cohen, Dan Connor, John Foster, Jean Gardiner, Eric Hobsbawm, John Hoffman, Alan Hunt, Arnold Kettle, Betty Matthews, Bert Pearce, Dave Priscott, Bob Rowthorn, Mike Seifert, Dave Wynn.

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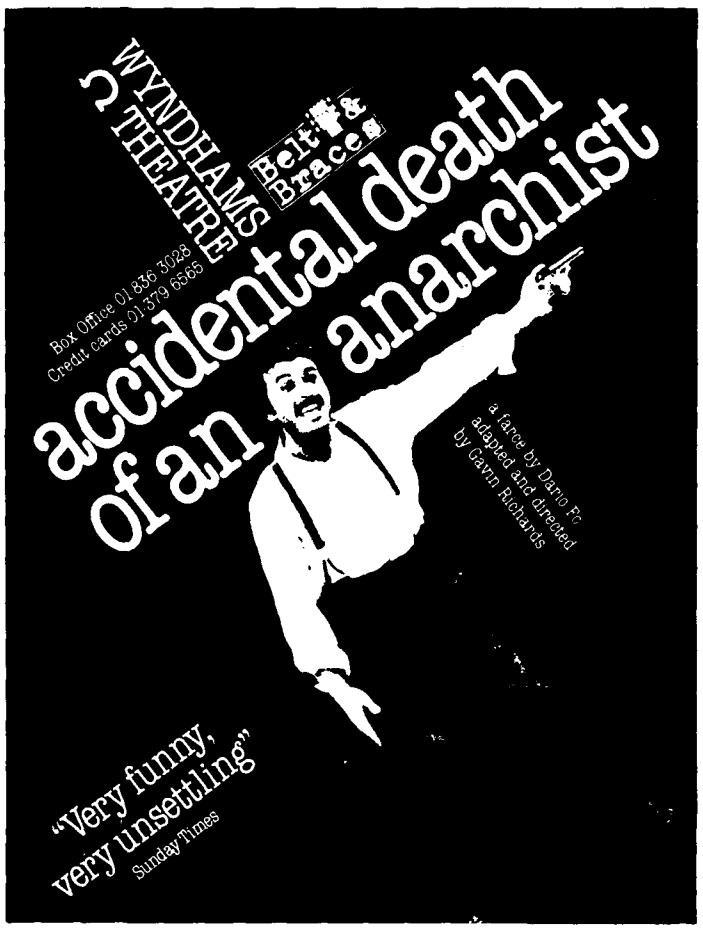
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TIME OUT

What is a trendy publisher who's just joined the Social Democrats doing, staking out his chic Covent Garden office with bouncers, sacking all his staff — 64 of them — and keeping London's most successful independent magazine off the streets for over two months — perhaps for ever?

It is more than a parochial question for thwarted Londoners. *Time Out* is a unique institution. Lumps of Left and alternative life have a symbiotic relationship with it. In the two months that the magazine has been off the streets, theatre audiences have plummetted and part of the Fringe face extinction. The magazine's phenomenal success over its 13 years lies in its combination of radical news and reviews with comprehensive listings of everything that's on in London. The capital's political life, too, is aided and abetted by the Agit Prop and News sections, which are scoured by a miscellany of moderates, Marxists, trancendental meditators and Special Branch.

It is the biggest selling Left magazine in Britain. Its 85,000 circulation is mainly confined to the capital. The right wing *Now* magazine, which bit the dust earlier this year, paid a fortune for expensive Fleet Street journalists, and yet went under with a circulation of 125,000 nationally. *Time Out* is not only already a remarkable success story, it was still growing despite the recession. Here was commerical success belonging to the Left and not the Right, for a change. More than this, the magazine had an organising relationship with cultural production and radical politics that extended from the margin to the mainstream, from the squatting and anti-nuke movement to the rise and rise of the Left in the Greater London Council. *Time Out* has provided the most radical and regular monitor of the changing scene in the capital.

The crisis of *Time Out* came from a pincer movement by the management: it sacked the staff for taking industrial action to defend the magazine's long-standing 'house agreement,' signed annually between the company and the federated unions representing all TO's staff. The agreement is an exemplar in the publishing industry — it's the best agreement in the National Union of Journalists, which often uses it as a source for model claims and clauses. At the centre of the struggle over the agreement was the staff's commitment to its four main principles: equal pay for all staff (the telephonist and classified ads salespeople earn the same as the news editor); disclosure of financial information and consultation over investment; application of TO's terms and conditions to new publishing ventures; operation of the dispute procedure.

After seven months fruitless negotiation, the journalists union (NUJ) and the two print unions (SOGAT and NGA) went into permanent session — as permanent as you can get. Staff occupied the offices 24-hours a day for a month, until the High Court granted a possession order against them. The sacked staff also produced *Not Time Out*, a free strike bulletin providing a skeleton listings and news. *Not Time Out* was banned, and became simply *Not*. It thrives as a 12-page tabloid giveaway with a 35,000 circulation.

Pay parity is the staff's passionate bottom line. They believe it costs everyone the same to live, eat, sleep and move about in the city. They believe it challenges arbitrary job hierarchies — the very people *Time Out's* management want to pay less are advertising staff who collect and collate the magazine's main source of revenue. By cash criteria they bring most value, but they'd get paid least. It also unites the staff. That, of course, is why the management hates it.

Parity also affects the organisation of work at the magazine, where sections do their own administration. There aren't armies of filing clerks whose pay and position puts them in a subordinate relation not only to the bosses but their fellow workers. Erosion of differentials is now positive policy in the NUJ, although the two print unions' official policy is much more conservative and promotes the maintenance of differentials. But the NUJ's policy is not confined to small radical firms. At the *Daily Mirror* over the past 10 years differentials have been steadily eroded by calculating pay awards on an average of all grades, and distributing a single cash figure across the board. All NUJ members now earn within a narrow band between £14,000 and £16,000. It was primarily parity which produced the remarkably sympathetic media coverage the staff enjoyed during their occupation. They appeared nice and democratic, and their principles had, after all, produced a very profitable enterprise. The management, by contrast, appeared a sullen bunch of boyos roughing up the most committed staff in Fleet Street.

The other side of the pincer movement was an attack on the very soul of the magazine. It was represented in the press as ex-hippy capitalist grows into long trousers and big business. But it wasn't as simple or as silly as that.

The owners wanted to de-politicise *Time Out*. One management minion bared their collective soul, not to the staff, but to the *Daily Mail* in May: 'There's no doubt that the kind of editorial content we offer, with our writers touting every cause in the book, puts a lot of people off buying it . . . if we have to clear out our entire staff onto the street and start all over again then so be it.'

Is *Time Out* already dead? It is all a matter of not only time, but timing, as rivals plan new 'time outs' purged of the politics. The management clearly has the resources for a long haul. So do the staff. The next question facing them is do they go it alone *if* the deadlock kills the golden goose. They believe *they are* Time Out.

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CLARET AND BLUE?

'The . . . Social Democratic Party . . . preaches a rigid doctrine of class war and economic determinism.' Roy Jenkins

These sentiments — allowing for the tense change — did indeed emerge from Roy Jenkins's pen, but they were describing that Social Democratic Party which had been H M Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation until it changed its name in 1907. Jenkins was writing in an 'interim biography' of Clement Attlee published in 1948. It may say something about the fate of political concepts that the phrase 'social democratic' has so altered its meaning during the present century.

At Warrington the present-day SDP gave Labour a fright — or rather Labour ought to have felt frightened. No dismissal by Doug Hoyle and others of the SDP as a 'media-created party' fated for oblivion can deny the fact of its success. Media-created parties may be just as capable of winning votes as some other sorts of party, especially in a political climate in which the strength of allegiances to both major parties has been weakening incrementally for almost two decades.

If one ignores the complications for analysis that are entailed by those voters who entered or left the Warrington electorate between May 1979 and July 1981, it becomes clear — on even the most generous reasonable reading of the results — that a minimum of 15% of Labour's 1979 support turned to the SDP. The figure could well have been as high as a quarter, especially if there were any 1979 Tory voters who voted Labour in the 1981 by-election. (There were almost certainly very few voters of this sort, as the swing from Labour to Conservative between October 1974 and May 1979 was less than 3%.)

The marked discrepancy between the findings of most of the opinion polls and the actual Warrington result strongly suggests a substantial late swing to the SDP that was almost certainly heavily at Labour's expense; certainly, one on-the-day poll was very much closer to the result than were earlier polls. Of course, the fact that so much SDP support, perhaps over a third of it, came from this late swing does imply the ephemeral and shallow nature of its commitment and of the party's appeal; equally, however, it shows the dangerous detachability of a substantial minority of Labour's support.

Contrary to ill informed observations by some press commentators, who seem to regard most of the north as a long time monolithic Labour stronghold, Warrington cannot be described as solidly Labour for generations. There were not even Labour candidacies in the constituency in general elections before World War I. Labour won there for the first time in 1923 and before World War II it won again only in 1929. There are other places, in both north and south, where for historical reasons one might expect Labour allegiances to be more deep rooted and the Labour vote to be correspondingly less detachable; perhaps a town like Burnley would qualify for this status. However, the difficulty for Labour remains, for there are more currently Labour held constituencies in both north and south with political histories like that of Warrington than there are places such as Burnley.

Perhaps as much as one half of Jenkins's SDP vote came from 1979 Tory voters, but it would be dangerous for the Left to be too sanguine about this. The Conservative vote, when it has such distinct minority status, is well known to be more detachable than in solidly Conservative seats; there can therefore be no certainty that the Conservative vote would decline to that degree in safe or even marginal Conservative seats. Both relatively and even in terms of the actual number of votes, Conservative losses would usually be less, even if general political circumstances were propitious to the SDP.

The future development of the SDP depends on a number of factors. One or two prominent Liberals who were at one time strongly hostile to an SDP-Liberal alliance have now been won over to the bandwagon, doubtless aware that this is just about the only method by which the Liberals are at all likely to get near real political power. However, one may wonder just how strong such an alliance may prove to be, especially if the controversy about which party's candidate is to fight Croydon North-west is repeated at each new by-election.

Moreover, if there were to be a succession of by-elections in which SDP candidates managed dramatically to build on an existing but nugatory Liberal vote while SDP supported Liberals elsewhere failed to achieve much growth in support, the temptation to the SDP leadership to go it alone might well be too great. Thus, the alliance would disintegrate amid mutual recriminations and an awareness throughout the general public that the SDP was as 'tainted' as the other parties.

For at the moment it is clearly the novelty of the SDP label, rather than any contribution from the Liberals, that is the vote puller. Even so, despite the label's apparent appeal, one may be permitted to wonder how long the SDP can grow when its two current extra-parliamentary glamour figures are not fighting as candidates and when it is reduced to finding its candidates from second raters and no hopers. The extent of media coverage of SDP affairs may show itself more capricious when nationally known personalities are not directly involved.

UNIVERSITY CUTS

Between 1963 and 1980 the British university

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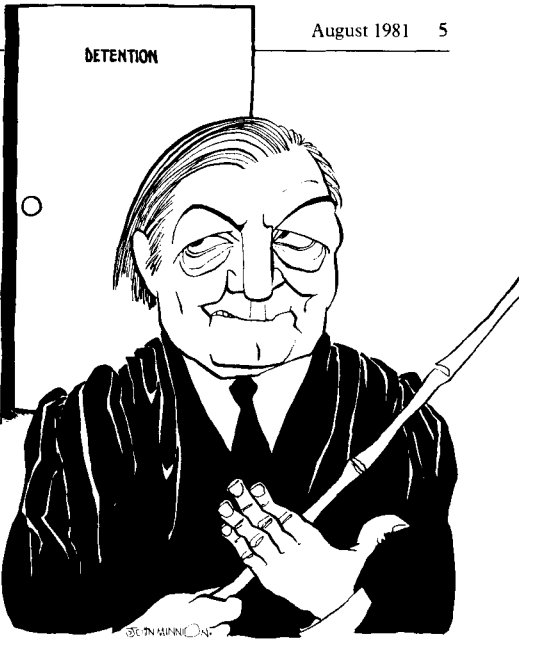

system witnessed the greatest expansion in its history. In line with the 1963 'Robbins principle' that higher education should be available for all those qualified, willing and able to use it, six new universities were built in England in the 1960s, and several technical colleges were given university status. The dramatic increase in overseas students' fees announced last year, coupled with a 10% cut in university finance over the next three years, has brought this period of expansion to an abrupt halt. The Association of University Teachers (AUT) has estimated that 5,000 academic jobs — 1 in 6 — and as many non-academic jobs are at risk because of the cuts in government grants. The Government has allocated £20m to the universities to cover the compensation costs of sacking lecturers with job security until retirement.

University recurrent grants are distributed not by government, but by the University Grants Committee (UGC), a body chaired by a permanent civil servant, with its remaining 14 academic and 5 lay members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education. The UGC has this year broken completely with traditional patterns of distribution and spread the cuts in a highly uneven way. At the top of the 'hit list', Salford University will have its grant cut by 28%, and its number of students by 30%. Cambridge has received only a 4% cut in finance and a 2% cut in student numbers. Clearly the UGC is now embarked on a massive rationalisation of universities akin to that being conducted in manufacturing industry. It is difficult to say how and why these decisions have been arrived at: the UGC conducts its meetings in total secrecy and university employees affected by its decisions have no right to learn how and why those decisions were reached.

But two themes do stand out: *elitism* and *utilitarianism*. The 14 UGC academics came from the large, old universities — Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh — traditionally favoured for educating the sons and daughters of the upper classes, and these universities have got off relatively lightly. Indeed the financial cutback in the universities with members sitting on the UGC is 5% — only half the average cut of 10%.

Second, it seems clear that the UGC has responded to a growing clamour amongst employers and their organisations, such as the CBI, to cut hard into subjects of no obvious relevance to industry. Music, drama, and minor languages have been particularly hard hit. Tory education spokesman Rhodes Boyson has been at the forefront of the campaign for a higher education system geared to industry's needs, once going so far as to suggest that universities such as Essex, with a strong Marxist presence, should be completely shut down.

Naturally the Government has presented its university cutbacks as the inexorable outcome of its higher education policy. They have noted, for instance, that the size of the 18 year old population will fall throughout the 1980s and that demand for arts subjects has been falling with particular rapidity. But these arguments are completely specious. It is true that the number of 18 year olds will fall in the 1980s, but the average size of the 18 year old population in the present decade in any one year — 895,000 — is far greater than the same figure for the 1970s — 782,000. In any case demand for university places as a whole, particularly amongst women and working class students is still rising, and the proportion of 18 year olds in Britain in higher education — the age participation rate — is one of the lowest among the advanced capitalist countries. The Government arguments about demand are therefore largely irrelevant and represent its attempt to justify policies taken on strictly monetarist grounds.

There are then three key issues in the higher education sphere, which must be taken up by the labour movement if government policy is to be reversed. The first is the threat to jobs and, in the case of academics, to a high degree of job security; the second is the shape and role of higher education; and the third is the lack of democracy in the higher education sphere, epitomised in the power of the elite and undemocratic UGC.

Serious though these issues are, they also present an unparalleled opportunity for the development of trade union unity. Many universities have joint union committees on which the four major unions — AUT, ASTMS, NALGO, and TGWU — are represented, and it is widely realised that when student numbers are cut, all jobs are at stake.

Struggles over jobs must be linked, if they are to be effective, with the role and purpose of higher education and with democracy within the universities. As presently constituted universities are elitist and undemocratic and communists and socialists working in them need to argue for a democratisation, both of *access* and of *structures*. Access must be widened to many more working class students as well as to minority groups, and decision making must be radically altered. The UGC should be abolished and replaced by an independent body with representatives from a wide range of interests. Such policies (as argued in the Communist Party Draft Document on Higher Education) would require collaboration with other teaching unions, through the embryonic Educational Alliance of teaching unions, and would also make it possible to appeal for support to the labour movement. Both the TUC and the Labour Party have opposed the higher education cuts, but a commitment to *expand* higher education will only be forthcoming when it is seen to be serving the interests of wider sections of society.

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RIOTS AND THE POLICE

In 1971 Major-General Frank Kitson, the Army's leading counter-insurgency theorist, issued the following much-quoted warning in his book *Low Intensity Operations:* 'If a significant and serious grievance arose such as might result from a significant drop in the standard of living, all those who now dissipate their protest over a wide variety of causes might concentrate their efforts and produce a situation which was beyond the power of the police to handle'. In recent weeks both the architects of police riot control strategy and civil libertarians who have documented their activities over the last decade had the grim and dubious satisfaction of seeing their worst predictions confirmed.

During the 1970s the police capacity to handle public order disturbances has been both expanded and refined. Between 1972-4 while the Heath government was facing up to the implications of its defeats in the 1972 miners' strike there was much debate about the need for a CRS-style 'third force', intermediate between police and army, to cope with demonstrations, strikes and terrorists. The police succeeded in scotching the idea, but have in effect created 'third forces' within their own organisations.

Following the example of the Metropolitan Police, which in 1965 established the Special Patrol Group as a mobile reserve to provide rapid additions of manpower where needed, more than half the forces in the UK now have similar units. Although performing a variety of duties (from rescue work to the highly controversial exercises in saturation policing of high crime areas) the SPGs have become *de facto* riot squads, with notorious consequences at Red Lion Square, Grunwick, Southall and elsewhere. In addition a sophisticated system of mutual aid has developed through the formation of 'police support units' in most forces since 1974. These consist of uniformed police officers who ordinarily perform routine patrol work, but are trained and available for rapid mobilisation to help out neighbouring forces in the event of civil disturbance. In addition to the SPGs and support units, numerous other police officers regularly receive training in crowd control techniques and the use of riot shields (first used at Lewisham and Notting Hill in 1977). The intensity of these exercises is suggested by the fact that a plea was made at the 1978 Police Federation Annual Conference that training be made less realistic because of an unacceptably high level of injuries to police on courses.

For some years now there have been frequent rank and file calls for better protective equipment, and even offensive weapons. In 1978, for example, a *Police Review* booklet *Public Order and the Police* argued: 'riot shields, strengthened helmets and goggles are only the beginning; the question of long staves and firearms must soon be considered.' It quotes an anonymous officer's solution to controlling riotous mobs: 'All you have to do is spray them — spray them with machine-guns.' In addition, police at all levels have pressed for a tightening of the laws regulating public order, for example by requiring advance notice of demonstrations and gaining powers to ban static meetings as well as marches. In recent weeks there have been demands from several quarters for a new form of Riot Act, which would render all people at a scene of disorder liable to arrest following a police warning.

In view of the high levels of injury suffered by police during the April Brixton riots, and the obvious vulnerability of their shields to petrol bombs, it is neither surprising nor unreasonable that there should have been renewed demands for improved protective clothing and equipment, and that riot helmets have been introduced for the first time. Far more disturbing and questionable is the availability and use of offensive equipment and tactics which (as observers have been forecasting for a long time) have brought home to the mainland lessons learned by the police and army in Ulster, such as Anderton's use of snatch squads in Manchester, and the promise of plastic bullets, water cannon and armoured vehicles. Perhaps the most shocking occurrence of all was the abuse of CS cartridges intended to penetrate buildings which, as the *New Statesman* revealed, were fired directly into crowds in Liverpool.

Although the British police response to riots remains lower in profile than most foreign forces, there has clearly been a stiffening of tactics over the last decade. But the rapid escalation of the problems they face and the response of the Government and some chief constables has surprised many police officers themselves. Both the Government and the police are falling into the trap of regarding riot control as an isolated and technical problem of the management of violence. Mrs. Thatcher is blind to the contribution of her disastrous economic and social policies to the causes of the riots, while the police remain insensitive to the close interdependence of routine, everyday policing policy and the violence they face. It is clear that a major grievance underlying the riots is police behaviour, in terms both of overpolicing of blacks and others in the inner city, and underpolicing of white racists.

This heightens the urgency of the long standing demands from the Left and civil libertarians for democratisation of the police force in terms of selection and training of personnel, investigation of complaints (especially of police violence), and accountability to elected local authorities for general policy. Despite the continued opposition of the police to any concrete independent channels of outside accountability (as opposed to the nebulous and abstract claim of police answerability to 'The Law'), the present vicious cycle of increasing hostility between police and blacks, as well as many white youths, cannot be in the interest of the police themselves. Robert Mark used to boast of the virtues of the traditional British softly, softly approach to crowd control: 'The real art of policing a free society or a democracy is to win by appearing to lose.' His successors seem in danger of losing while appearing to win.

Contributors: **Beatrix Campbell Chris Husbands John Kelly Robert Reiner**

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Keith Cowling

Can the British Car Industry Survive?

The British motor industry is clearly in deep crisis. The imminent closure of the Rover plant at Solihull is a stark and vivid indication of this, comprising as it does some of the most modern plant and equipment in the Leyland empire. This article seeks to examine the roots and the characteristics of this present crisis before looking ahead to the future of the industry under the present regime. Subsequently an alternative perspective will be developed which, it is hoped, may serve as an example of the way in which the alternative economic strategy (AES) might be detailed and fleshed-out, but also emphasising the inter-relationships between sectors of the economy which are implicit in the AES. Such industry-level investigations may provide useful input into the detailed, grass-roots discussion from which workers' plans will evolve.

RECENT HISTORY

Many of the specific problems of the British car industry can be traced back to the stagnation of investment in the industry in the latter half of the sixties which was largely induced by the specific restrictionist fiscal policies of the Labour government of that period. Earlier, the myopic behaviour of British manufacturers and the stop-go policies of the fifties, which had a particularly profound effect on the motor industry, had left the industry in a rather exposed position, despite starting out from a position of relative strength at the end of World War II. But the massive cutbacks in planned investment in the late sixties left the industry with an outdated stock of plant and equipment and an outdated model range at precisely the time at which it was to be exposed to the full rigours of international competition. Whilst British manufacturers were busy cutting back planned investment projects, their international rivals in Germany, France, Italy and Japan were expanding very fast. When subsequently the then Tory administration, with a variety of inducements, expanded demand for cars very rapidly over the period 1970-1973 (eg, by 43% in 1971 alone), British manufacturers proved quite unable to respond and as a result imports grew very rapidly.

The substantial foothold established by foreign cars at this time, had significant long term consequences for the British motor industry. Although the share of imports had been rising through the sixties even by the end of that decade it was still less than 10%. But the rapid increase in the early seventies acted as a catalyst for a change in consumer tastes[1] and as an inducement for an extensive distribution network for imports to be established, a development which was also encouraged by tariff reductions following the Kennedy Round of 1972 and entry into the EEC in 1973.

The massive increase in import penetration in the seventies was also promoted by the series of mergers by which British Leyland (BL) was finally created in 1968. Merger had provided BL with the opportunity of 'rationalising' its distribution system. Along with other domestic manufacturers, Bhaskar[2] estimates that almost 7,000 dealers were disenfranchised over the period 1968/1976 and a majority of them who remained in the industry established import franchises. Thus importers without a domestic manufacturing base ended up in 1976 with about 40% of all dealer outlets. The one remaining impediment to a rapid increase in imports had been removed, at least partly as a consequence of the creation of BL. By 1975 the share of imports had reached 33%.

British Leyland

In response to the crisis of the British motor industry of the mid-seventies, created by slump and a lack of international competitiveness, the Labour government adopted the recommendations of the Ryder Report on BL in 1975 and in the same year provided Chrysler (UK) with a massive subsidy. The Ryder Report saw large scale investment in BL as the appropriate response to crisis, and coupled this with a commitment to the production of high volume cars, ie, Austin-Morris. These policies were rapidly

[1] See P Dunnett *The Decline of the British Motor Industry, 1980.*

[2] K Bhaskar *The Future of the UK Motor Industry, 1979.*

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abandoned and replaced by the Edwardes Plan of 1978. This comprised two significant departures from the Ryder Plan. First it revised downwards the market share targets for BL — from 33% to 25% in the case of the domestic UK market — and second it imposed a new organisational structure on the corporation.[3] It was claimed that the existing structure was over-centralised with remote management and excessively long chains of command. The new structure implied the decentralisation of operational decisions, with the car division being split up into a number of relatively self-contained production units, together with the centralisation of long-run, strategic decisions. This was the format chosen fifty years previously by General Motors under Alfred Sloan.

Since the adoption of the Edwardes Plan, BL has lurched from crisis to crisis with 'the Plan' being constantly revised in the light of events. Constant surgery has left the patient progressively weaker. The Edwardes answer to any apparent lack of profitability at any point in the empire has been the axe rather than any attempt at diagnosis. Areas of activity which have been identified as 'winners' in one period have been axed six months later. Sheer managerial incompetence has been breathtaking — the Triumph TR7 sports car was moved from Speke (Liverpool) to Canley (Coventry) and then a few months later to Solihull before finally being laid to rest, and all this after a belated recognition that the main overseas market for this car, the US, had always preferred an open-top version. Examples abound, but the basic problem seems to have been that interdependencies were never recognised, perspectives for long run decisions were always based on short term observations and decisions were constantly being revised. The whole corporation is now caught up in an accelerating downward spiral with only the Metro to relieve the gloom. The Rover, the Jaguar and even the Land Rover — all identified by Edwardes as 'winners' — are all in desperate trouble. Of course much of the downward spiral can be attributed to the macroeconomic policies of the present government, but much remains to be explained by the policies of Edwardes — a Thatcher in microcosm.

> Whilst British manufacturers were busy cutting back planned investment projects, their international rivals were expanding very fast

In the same year as the Edwardes Plan was unveiled, 1978, Chrysler revealed that it had sold its interests in Europe to Peugeot, thus creating Europe's largest car manufacturer. This in fact came just one month after the Labour government had approved a three year plan for Chrysler, and just three years after the original huge injection of government money into Chrysler. To secure government approval of the sale Chrysler indicated that Linwood would have to close if the sale were not to go through, whereas if the sale did go through then Peugeot could guarantee no plant closures and no redundancies. Less than three years later Linwood is closed.

The components industry

However, despite the recent history of BL and Chrysler, it would be wrong to conclude that the British motor industry generally has been an unprofitable area of activity for capital, whether British or American. Ford has continuously made substantial profits in the UK but has progressively switched assembly away from the UK, despite increasing its share of sales in the UK market, and firms in the British motor components industry have occupied a dominant and profitable position in both the domestic and European markets. The British car industry is much less vertically integrated than in other countries, with 55% of the cost of a British car going to component and materials suppliers. Five firms (Lucas, GKN, Dunlop, AP and AE) dominate the industry, with individual firms dominating the market for specific products, eg, Lucas supplies 95% of all starters and 80-85% of lamps and horns, GKN 80% of axle shafts, AP 90% of clutches, and AE 75% of pistons.[4] Recently these firms have been switching an increasing proportion of their investment overseas, particularly within the EEC, due to the relative decline in the British car assembly sector. As will be argued later the presence of this sector is crucial in explaining the state's response to the Leyland crisis.

THE BRITISH MOTOR INDUSTRY AND THE EEC

It was argued above that entry to the EEC was one of the factors leading to the crisis in the British motor industry. We now need to examine this rather more carefully in order to identify gainers and losers. It is clear, in an era of monopoly or oligopoly capitalism, that the creation of a tariff-free area like the EEC need not imply an increase in international competition in the sense that prices are held below what they might have been. Imagine a reduction in tariffs between two countries, each with a tightly-knit oligopoly group of similar size and efficiency dominating the car industry. Under such conditions potential rivalry will be seen more or less symmetrically by all participants and this will serve to sustain the degree of collusion. Price-cutting, and other attempts at market share expansion, will generally not take place because the response by rivals will be seen as both substantial and immediate. The very closeness of rivalry will serve to sustain the oligopolistic structure. However, if the reduction in tariffs happens to coincide with an emerging assymmetry, then we would expect to observe a substantial change in market shares as the stronger oligopoly group expands at the expense of the weaker.

The evolution of the EEC has witnessed both cases. Whilst UK entry led to a rapid import penetration of the UK market the same was not true of France and Germany where the reduction in tariffs led to a much slower interpenetration of markets. The symmetry of rivalry between the French and German motor industries led to the preservation of their domestic market shares. In contrast the UK motor industry entered the EEC in a position of grave weakness. It was no threat to the rest and therefore aggressive policies could be pursued in the UK by EEC importers. As mentioned earlier, this process was made easier by the displacement of a large fraction of the distribution network within the UK by domestic firms.

How Britain has suffered

The story needs more differentiation. Whilst Leyland had little to gain from entry, this was not so for other important elements of the motor industry. The other major assemblers, Ford, Chrysler and General Motors (Vauxhall), were all seeking to integrate their European operations, and the British components industry was in a powerful position to gain from entry. Unimpeded intra-European trade meant that the American assemblers based in the UK were now free to source their UK sales from any production facility within the EEC. This implied that labour militancy within the UK would be met with the threat or reality of a switch in production and/or investment away from UK plants, and a reciprocal threat could be issued to labour forces in the other countries of the EEC. Similarly each nation state within the EEC would be more exposed to the threat of a switch in production and investment by capital with a multinational production base within the EEC. As a result we would expect a growth in the subsidisation of production and investment by the state. The Ford engine plant in South Wales is a case in point with the state providing more than 50% of the investment expenditure of over £250 million, this outcome being the result of intense competition between

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the French and British governments. More generally, free trade and the free movement of capital imply an increase in the leverage of monopoly capital *vis-à-vis* both workers and the nation state and provide an added inducement to the co-operation of the state in creating an environment where wage costs will be held down.

What of the British components industry? The firms involved had secured a potentially powerful independent position because of the lack of vertical integration in the UK assembly industry and because of the early development of advanced engineering concepts in British cars (eg, front wheel drive, see Dunnett (1980)). Given this favourable assymmetry they were anxious for easier access to the rapidly expanding European market for their products. Accession to the EEC initially led to a rapid expansion in the export of components, but subsequently there has been a switch from exports to direct investment within the EEC by the major British component firms.

The outcome of all this is a British motor industry which is either simply part of the integrated European activities of American capital or which has an increasingly important EEC production base. Deindustrialisation within the UK has proceeded in this sector either because of the peripheral position of the UK in the European contest or as a response to the power and militancy of workers in the UK. Production has been run down and investment shifted, except where substantial state inducements are offered. Ford, for example, was producing 400,000 *fewer* cars in the UK in 1979 than it did ten years previously. Thus the crisis induced by entry to the EEC is a crisis of production, investment and employment in the UK rather than being directly a crisis for British or American capital with interests in the UK. This is not to say that there is not now a crisis for these elements of capital, but that this crisis is not directly related to entry into the EEC. The one exception to this is British Leyland, which had neither the European production base of the American assemblers nor the relative strength of the British components industry.

The Japanese question

One consequence of these developments was that the 'British' motor industry has proved very resistant to any suggestion that its problems may be alleviated by general import controls. Such controls would obviously impede trade and investment flows within its own sphere of influence. In contrast we would expect to observe a general inclination to recommend import controls where the trade flows were outside its sphere of influence. Japanese cars would be an obvious target, but so also would be imports from Eastern Europe, although they are, at least for the moment, much less threatening. The campaign by the British Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) against Japanese imports goes back to 1975 when state intervention was obtained to secure 'voluntary' restraint by Japanese exporters. Since that time there has been a mounting crescendo of hysterical outbursts by the industry, all aimed at this very selective target.

Whilst obviously a problem for 'British' capital, the reaction to Japanese expansionism has had an important diversionary role. The British motor industry, and increasingly other industries, has tried to allocate the blame for the deindustrialisation of this sector of the British economy on the Japanese in order to cover up shifts in its own production and investment patterns which are largely responsible for the deindustrialisation and resulting job loss which has been observed. The facts are clear. Whilst the share of the British car market captured by imports rose dramatically from 33% in 1975 to over 50% in 1979, the Japanese share of the market rose from 9% to only 10.9%, whereas the share of imports from the EEC rose from 20% to 38% and a substantial fraction of this increase can be traced to the activities of the UK based American assemblers, who have chosen to source an increasing proportion of their sales in the UK from their facilities on the continent. Ford dominates the UK car market with a share of around 30%, more than half of which has, in recent years, been sourced from plants outside the UK. It is in fact the biggest car importer into the UK.

STATE INTERVENTION

As mentioned earlier, state intervention in the late sixties served to depress investment in the motor industry, whereas the expansionary policies of the early seventies were such as to encourage a rapid import penetration of the British market. The crisis of the mid-seventies led to a more direct involvement of the state in the industry in terms of

informal import controls (in the case of Japanese imports); specific subsidies (eg, Chrysler); restructuring (eg, BL), and raising the rate of exploitation (eg, by keying the funding of BL to productivity targets).

Why has BL been rescued?

A question which might reasonably be asked here, particularly given the increasingly monetarist stance of successive governments since 1975, is why should the state actively seek to maintain a company like BL? Some might argue that the social consequences of its demise would be too severe to contemplate. But why should the state draw the line at BL when it has revealed itself willing to allow the numbers of unemployed to rise by more than a million in a single year? Or at least why did the state not eliminate the major loss-making division, Austin-Morris (ie, volume cars), and either run or sell off the remaining profitable divisions?

The answer would seem to lie in the crucial importance, at least in the short or medium term, of BL as an assembler of bought-in components produced by the profitable segment of the British-owned motor industry. To shut down the volume car division of BL would have had a major impact on the profitability of companies like GKN, Lucas and Dunlop. In the long run they could look elsewhere for markets, and they have indeed been investing heavily in the EEC in order to capture an increasing share of a rapidly growing market, but in the short run they could easily have gone bankrupt. It was important that the state should manage BL in such a way as to give

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[3] It was also to involve a more abrasive approach to 'industrial relations'. Mr Edwardes clearly saw one of his prime tasks as smashing any militant shop stewards' organisation in BL.

[4] See Bhaskar 1979.

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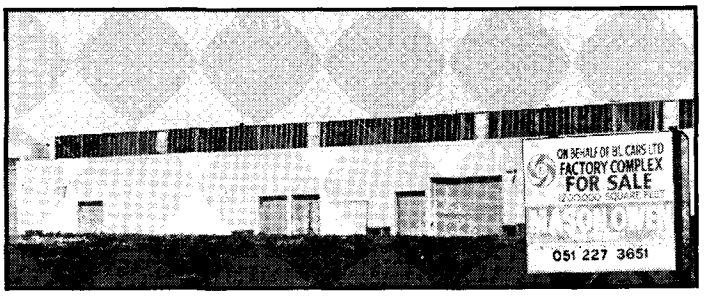

them a breathing space to reorganise their production and marketing. This is what the state has obligingly arranged, under the direction of a chairman seconded from the components industry!

BL was and is in a peculiarly dependent position *vis-à-vis* the components industry. In contrast to the high degree of vertical integration characteristic of most of the world's major car producers, BL pays out more than 55% of the value of the car to the suppliers of components and materials. Given that the markets for most of the components are dominated on the supply side by one or two producers, it leaves BL in a very vulnerable position. This may go at least some of the way to explaining BL's lack of profitability, with the suppliers of components exploiting their dominant position to squeeze the final assembler. It may therefore be more instructive to see the 'British' part of the British motor industry as a small group of powerful and profitable components manufacturers being supplied with assembly services at or below competitive rates by an independent downstream assembler (BL) which on becoming unprofitable, partly as a result of their own activities, was taken over by the state rather than being allowed to go bankrupt.

Since that point the components firms have progressively switched their production to a continental EEC base, which has allowed BL to be gradually run down. The latest development in this realignment has been the introduction of the Metro with, it is reported, 70% of foreign components, but with 90% apparently supplied by British companies (according to BL). Thus the circle is complete! BL's existing model range with a high fraction of British-*made* components is phased out in orderly fashion to allow the British components industry time to adjust to its new European role, and at the same time new models are introduced using components supplied by the same British firms, but produced elsewhere. The British components monopolies maintain their dominance in the domestic market while jobs are being transferred out of the UK.

BL and Honda

Collaboration between BL and Honda, which was encouraged by the state, can be seen as a natural extension of the process whereby BL is run in the interests of private capital in the components industry. If BL is weak in a particular part of the model range then the British components industry suffers. A Japanese replacement will be quite acceptable provided British components are used.[5] In fact this can be seen as the beginnings of an inevitable accomodation of Japanese expansionism — collaboration with BL provides a safer response than allowing independent investment by Japanese car companies within the UK. Notice that the components industry has made a big issue of the 'British' content of Nissan cars to be produced in the UK and has made representations to the government that permission for investment should be conditional on a satisfactory answer to this question.

The rescue of Chrysler can be seen in terms of the same logic as was applied to BL. At that time, the government, via Mr Varley, made the argument in terms of the costs to the state of the shutdown of Chrysler, but of course these arguments, involving redundancy pay, unemployment benefits and taxes foregone, can be applied to redundancies anywhere in the economy, and yet despite this there has been a rapid escalation in the rate of redundancy since then. The importance of Chrysler (formerly Rootes, and now Talbot) to the British components monopolies would seem to provide a much more compelling explanation of the state financed rescue operation.

THE FUTURE: PRESENT REGIME

The future of the British motor industry is obviously closely related to the future of the British industrial economy in general. Present economic policies are inducing a slump of enormous proportions in British industrial output and employment. The continuance of such policies will mean the prolonging of the downward spiral in which the system is now trapped. The motor industry, like other durable consumer good or investment good industries, will be disproportionately affected by this process, given that the timing of such purchases is quite flexible. Thus, given the government's stance, and given that a substantial upturn in the world economy is unlikely at the present time, the British car industry is going to be in an increasingly difficult position. But the general slump is not the only explanation of the current position and neither is it the only explanation of the likely future of the industry.

We have seen how more than half the UK market has been handed over to imports, a much greater proportion than any other major car producing country, and although the appreciation of sterling over the last two years has until very recently made things that much more difficult for British produced cars, the massive penetration took place prior to this and will be extremely difficult to reverse. Any general slump in demand for cars will clearly affect the profitability of British car companies, but the effect is magnified by the very low market share captured by British cars.

Mr Edwardes has been satisfied to set his sights very low and has sought merely to stabilise BL's position by a strategy of investment in new models and a planned expansion in production over a very limited area of BL's interests. The first in the range of new models, the Metro, has done reasonably well but it will have only a marginal impact on BL's market share as it tends to displace the Mini, BL's previously largest selling model. The planned rapid expansion of production in the case of Rover, Jaguar and Land Rover would appear poorly conceived. The big new plant for Rover has now been abandoned, Jaguar production has been severely curtailed and the plans for Land Rover are in the process of being drastically revised.

Undermining trade union organisation

Two fundamental, and interrelated strategies underpin these specific policies. First the introduction of a new model has been used as the occasion for the introduction of a new system of managerial control over the production process. The introduction of the Metro to Longbridge coincided with the expulsion of Derek Robinson, the introduction of robotics and the speeding up of the work process. The one was made conditional on the other — the workers could see their future at BL was tied to the introduction of new models, but the introduction of such models would be on management's terms. The general level of unemployment in the West Midlands, and the resulting real fear of the workers about redundancy, made the whole process that much easier for management.

The other basic strategy has been to threaten closure to plants which are unprofitable and to reward plants with expansion where profitability is high. This of course would be typical capitalist strategy but in this case it can be shown to be misconceived, even within its own terms. First, Edwardes has appeared to use very narrow accounting concepts at the individual plant level which have neglected

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> The British motor industry has tried to allocate the blame for the deindustrialisation of this sector on the Japanese

important interdependencies between plants — ie, lopping off one plant which appears to be making a loss may actually reduce the profitability of the enterprise as a whole; and second he has called for substantial expansion wherever profitability has appeared high, apparently ignoring the limitations of the market in question, and the investment plans of rivals. Thus the fact that Rover, Land Rover or Jaguar appear highly profitable does *not* mean that doubling the capacity to produce the *same* cars will be particularly profitable, particularly when rivals are already planning new models which are very similar. It is this narrow, accountants' view of the criteria for investment which appears to have led BL up a series of blind alleys.

Continuing decline

The other basic flaw in BL, which will continue to dog its performance in the foreseeable future, is its continuing dependence on the British components industry, to which it appears in many ways subordinated. Not only will BL's profitability be restricted by the dominance of the component makers, but also BL's production will increasingly generate fewer jobs within the UK as the British components industry moves its centre of gravity towards the continent. BL will undoubtedly continue to be supplied by firms like GKN and Lucas, but the components which will be assembled will be increasingly imported. As already mentioned, it would appear that the Metro, as well as providing the opportunity for raising the rate of exploitation of British workers, is also providing the opportunity for raising the proportion of imported components.

What of the future for the rest of the car industry under the existing regime? Talbot is likely to be increasingly used by Peugeot as a convenient network to assemble and sell Peugeot cars, therefore significantly constraining employment within the UK, whilst Ford may continue to switch production to Spain, although this could be reversed if state intervention made this profitable.

Thus, under existing arrangements, and without a substantial U-turn by the government, BL is likely to lurch from crisis to crisis, with Edwardes threatening a complete shutdown in the absence of profitability, whilst Talbot, Ford and Vauxhall will increasingly source their UK sales from continental plants given the now peripheral position of UK production. Is there any alternative and more fruitful scenario we can draw for the British motor industry?

THE FUTURE: AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY

Rather than accepting the apparently inevitable decline of the British motor industry it would seem important at this juncture to begin to formulate the beginnings of a possible alternative strategy which may serve to focus discussion, on the basis of which an alternative, workers' plan might emerge. It will also be important to distinguish where we might like to be at some unspecified point in the future, and where we might reasonably hope to move in the more immediate future. This is important because of the fairly widely held view on the Left that because the product of the motor industry can be seen to be in some sense socially inefficient, therefore it follows that the decline of the industry is desirable and that workers in the industry should be redeployed producing 'useful' things.[6] Whilst accepting that this line of argument carries some force, it is important to distinguish its long term implications from the short run issues of involuntary unemployment and declining workers' control over existing production processes.

Short term objectives

The short term objectives of a workers' plan for the British motor industry should include an immediate move to full capacity working by means of subsidised price cuts for the various products of BL.

This reflation via subsidised price cuts for BL would be part of a general reflation via state financed price cuts in the public enterprise sector. This sort of reflation has many attractive features and would go hand in hand with a programme of expanded public investment. It provides a way of expanding without drawing in excessive imports of manufactured goods — indeed it could be expected to do the reverse — nor would it involve the uncertainties of the impact of reducing taxes, nor of course the obvious contradictions involved in the current policy of trying to achieve expansion via cuts in real wages. Since every extra person employed, given lower prices and higher sales, pays tax, reduces unemployment payments and displaces imports, the output of the whole economy can grow, given any balance of payments constraint. Such policies will also tend to raise real wages and therefore reduce the possibilities of an inflationary spiral following expansion (ie, think of price cuts for BL; BR; National Bus: local authority buses; electricity; gas; PO etc).

Specifically within the car industry, price cuts by BL will induce price cuts by other car firms, but the outcome would probably still be an increase in the market share for BL cars. The question may then be asked — does this put jobs at risk in the private sector of the British car industry? This is doubtful for two reasons. First, the British market will remain attractive for the car firms at prices much lower than current prices — the price of a British car in the UK market is normally about 50% higher than the same model in Belgium! Second, the general reduction in the prices of British cars will tend to imply a big increase in car sales in total (the price elasticity of demand for cars in aggregate is estimated to be quite high), so that even if the market shares of Ford, Vauxhall and Talbot should fall this is quite consistent with an increase in their individual sales, and therefore with an improvement in employment prospects. The same would of course be true of the components industry.

Some other useful bonuses follow. The reduction in the price of new cars will allow the more rapid scrapping of the oldest vintage of cars and will therefore result in a more rapid improvement in fuel-efficiency and safety and a more rapid reduction in pollution. On a topical note, it will allow for a more rapid switch-over to lead-free petrol. Put another way, the tighter enforcement of safety and pollution regulations can be achieved at lower cost to the car user.

Import controls

The development of effective controls over trade and investment patterns, and the extension of control over production, are obvious prerequisites for any effective workers' plan for the industry. It is clear that with their multinational production base, the private sector of the motor industry can easily choose to source their UK sales from outside the UK, and have been increasingly choosing to do so. This leverage *vis-à-vis* both workers and the state will obviously get in the way of any effective AES and must be countered by the development of multinational trade union organisation and pressure for state controls over trade and investment. This is clearly a difficult area and

[5] Of course there will be a lot of grumbling about the Japanese component of the Leyland-Honda (Triumph Acclaim) and continuing attempts to raise the 'British' content.

[6] You get the strong flavour of this kind of argument in IWC Motors Group *A Worker's Enquiry into the Motor Industry, 1978*.

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as a prerequisite effective inter-plant and inter-firm combine organisations within the domestic sector of the industry must be set up.

The other short term aims relate to the structure of the industry in the UK. Talbot, as a part of the UK car manufacturing industry, is in a very vulnerable position. It will be increasingly used by Peugeot as an outlet for Peugeot cars either imported or assembled in the UK. A takeover by BL would provide BL with some reasonably modern production units; a range of additional models that it needs in the short and medium term; a substantial product development group to supplement its own rather impoverished team; a potentially very significant contract with Iran; and an additional chain of distributors. It would also have the beneficial negative effect of controlling the expansion of Peugeot in the UK. The merger could be handled quite efficiently within the new multi-divisional structure of BL, leaving Talbot as a quasi-autonomous production unit but probably integrating the marketing arrangements.

> The introduction of the Metro to Longbridge coincided with the expulsion of Derek Robinson, the introduction of robotics and the speeding up of the work process

Nissan

The welcome for Nissan can be justified in the positive sense that it would allow the UK motor industry to move most rapidly in the direction of the most efficient and dynamic segment of the world motor industry, and in the negative sense that if direct investment by Japanese capital were not allowed, import penetration of the UK market would be that much higher, by both Japanese and EEC cars. Clearly the gains to the UK are going to be conditional on the UK content of the Datsun cars which would be produced in the UK, but an excessive amount of hysteria is now being whipped up by the British motor industry. For every Datsun car assembled by British workers rather than imported there is a gain for workers in the UK. For every additional part of that car produced by British workers there is a gain for workers in the UK, but UK components firms are not necessarily talking about this. They are anxious for the contracts, but whether they are sourced from British plants is a matter over which they will have total control. The essential point is that the British firms which are currently so hysterical about Nissan are concerned about their profit component of Nissan cars produced in the UK, and are not interested in the British wage component. Clearly any investment by Nissan will have to be closely controlled and therefore a joint venture with a revamped National Enterprise Board might provide a useful arrangement. However it is clear that most of Nissan's UK production will simply displace Japanese (and EEC) imports, or will be directed towards the European market, and will therefore not threaten jobs in the rest of the UK motor industry. It is also necessary to reiterate that despite all the hysteria most of the job displacement in the UK motor industry over the past decade has been due to the rapid increase in EEC imports, particularly those by Ford.

Long term objectives

What of the long term perspective? The central issue must surely be the attainment of full democratic control within the motor industry. Whereas in the short term the strategy is of necessity somewhat defensive, although operating within a coherent perspective for the

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industry, in the longer term the initiative has to be grasped, certainly in the case of the publicly owned sector of the industry. Management will be appointed by and responsible to workers' committees representing not only workers within the industry but also workers more broadly, ie, those involved in both supplying goods and services to the motor industry and receiving output from it. Some suggestions of the form such initiatives might take would include the diversification of BL's activities via merger and association and a massive research and development programme aimed at both new products and new technologies. The first aim in the longer term would be to ensure that BL established a grip over the supply of components. This could take two forms — the direct entry of BL into components production and the provision of associate status for the fringe of smaller components companies. Such developments are important because of BL's uniquely exposed position with regard to components, and also because of the growing tendency for British components firms to move production out of the country. At the very minimum BL should develop its own independent source for casting and forging which would not normally be regarded by major world car companies as components to be bought-in. But BL should also at least threaten to enter all areas of components production which are effectively monopolised — the threat may be sufficient to induce a satisfactory response. It should be made clear that BL would not be seeking to displace employment from these sectors — this has already been happening as British components companies have switched production to the continent. The central point is that BL would make clear its willingness to move into any appropriate area of production in the absence of satisfactory arrangements with existing suppliers.

Diversification

Another aspect of the diversification of BL's activities might be the provision of an umbrella organisation for the penumbra of small firms in the motor industry which would seek to promote their expansion in export markets. This would include the small, specialist car and vehicle producers, as well as the small components firms. They would remain as independent producers but would be able to market themselves more efficiently on a world-wide basis using BL's distribution network. The development of new products and new technologies would allow for a much more radical appraisal of the pattern of consumption and the content and organisation of work. Clearly, although the car is a very flexible form of transportation, it is in many ways socially inefficient in use. The socialisation of the industry, via public ownership and democratic workers' control, implies a constant striving to both improve the social efficiency of the product which is presently being produced and to create, and put into production, alternative possible forms of transportation. The main point to grasp is that teams responsible for product development should be encouraged to adopt a broad, social perspective, rather than a narrow commercial one. This will be easier to establish if it is made quite clear from the start that not only is employment guaranteed, but that BL will be allowed to evolve in any way which its workers believe is socially appropriate. This will give job security without the ossification of industrial structure — BL will become a platform from which a variety of production opportunities can be pursued, all emanating from the specific skill-base of that organisation.

There will undoubtedly be a broadly based interest in the rest of society concerning the way in which BL might evolve and the state could act to provide an incentive structure to guide such development along appropriate lines. Such intervention could be justified on two sorts of grounds — to help overcome the impact of a long history of the moulding of consumer behaviour, via the advertising activities of the motor industry, aimed at creating wants in the form of often quite trivial changes in existing models, and secondly, to provide incentives

for the development of features that have broad social benefits which may not be capable of being reflected in the prices individual consumers are willing to pay for the product. Directions of development to be encouraged by state intervention might include fuel economy; pollution control (including the introduction of engines suited to lead-free petrol); safety; durability. The mechanisms for intervention could echo the existing state involvement in defence industries, ie, advance orders and prototype development, research contracts, and subsidies.

New technologies

As well as exploring new products, attention will also be focused on the possibilities of a fundamentally different sort of technology aimed at enhancing work and skill rather than simply replacing it. Such a move from the present forms of technology will only be achieved in a carefully nurtured and sheltered environment. It would be quite wrong to believe that some alternative technology, capable of competing in world markets with existing technology, could be readily trundled out. Just as the rotary engine will, and has had, difficulties in competing with the piston engine because of the long history of investment and development lying behind the piston engine, so a new skill-enhancing technology will require a long period of development and protection before it can effectively compete with the existing technology. This is quite consistent with the view that such an alternative technology is potentially more efficient, given that the existing technology was adopted for reasons of domination and control as well as for reasons of efficiency.

Obviously any workers' plan for the motor industry has to mesh-in with plans for other industries and the economy as a whole, but rather than being imposed from above by some centralised bureaucracy, the development of such workers' plans within the context of the AES would hopefully proceed by means of a process of creative interaction. This might include the transfer of workers with knowledge of the planning of specific industries for spells with the central planning agencies so that macroeconomic planning proceeds along a path which is both well-informed and meaningful to those directly engaged in production. This is surely the direction in which the development of the AES must now proceed. □

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Violence Against Women: male power in action

Vicki Seddon

Suddenly, violence against women became a public issue in the autumn of 1980. The Ripper murders, the outrage at the outcome of the Maws case, the dramatic incidents at showings of *Dressed to Kill*, and the appearance overnight of Angry Women slogans had the news men reaching for their mikes and the public sitting up, startled. This was not, however, the beginning of campaigning around the issue of violence by the women's liberation movement, nor the first time that the public's attention had been drawn to it. By the early 70s, the expression 'battered wife' and later 'battered granny' had appeared, and a select committee[1] had reported on Violence in Marriage. This committee had been so concerned at the evidence it had received that it had recommended refuge provison of one place for each 10,000 of the population. In a city of a half million people, that would mean 50 places. And the majority of women in refuges arrive after suffering brutal and prolonged assault over several years. The incidence of less severe physical violence can only be guessed at.

The feminists of the current wave had long ago accepted that financial dependence of women on men, an important factor in women's oppression, was not, and is not, the whole story. Two other mechanisms that maintain the power of men have been identified. One is through the control of sexuality and fertility, and the other is through violence, and fear of violence.

Advances have certainly been made, both in the financial independence of women, and their rights of bodily control, though in neither area is the situation perfect. Nevertheless, many women now have an income of their own, of some sort, and most women have access to contraception and abortion. But although there is now a

Vicky Seddon works as the student counsellor at Sheffield City Polytechnic. She is a delegate to Sheffield Trades Council and a member of the Yorkshire District Committee of the Communist Party.

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Domestic Violence Act in force, there is still very little protection for women. Women are beaten, kicked[2], raped, scalded and forcibly imprisoned in their homes and mugged, raped and murdered on the streets. Injunctions under the Act have not proved remarkably effective, nor are the police noticeably more ready to use their powers.

The threat to all women

There is a messiness in trying to fit violence into the accepted conceptualisations and established theories, like class analysis. Violence is no respecter of class position. If you are a wealthy woman, you might not be attacked on the street at night, because you will be safe in the car you can afford, but that will not stop you from being thumped at home, though it might mean you can find somewhere else to live relatively easily. So class position mitigates the effects of violence, but does not remove the fear of violence which is the paralysing agent, the pervasive and persistent reminder of the vulnerability of women and the ability men have to explolit that vulnerability.

What is it like to be a woman out on your own in the street at night? You hear footsteps behind you. You think 'Is he going to pass me? Is he following me?' Fear does something awful to your stomach, or chest, or throat. You keep on going, heart beating in panic. As far as you are concerned, he might be a rapist or a mugger. An exaggeration? Ask any woman who in the last few years has been out by herself at night. That fear is real. Many is the time that the fear could have been avoided if the man had had the consciousness to think how it was affecting you; if he had stopped and waited a few minutes until you had passed, or crossed over the road away from you.

'All men are rapists' says the slogan. Well, no, not all men are actually going to rape women. There are many men who know that they themselves could never rape. The point of the slogan is that women do not know this of individual men. Control through fear of violence is effective exactly because women do not know who is going to be a rapist and who is not. Any strange man, in the eyes of a woman, might be a rapist, or a battering spouse, someone to be feared and on your guard against. And all men benefit from this fear in the way women defer to them, attempt to placate them, make sure they do not provoke them.

Domestic violence

Violence on the streets is only part of the problem. More women are on the receiving end of violence in the home than ever face violence outside it. Out of 3,020 cases of violent crime in Edinburgh and Glasgow in a year,[3] 25% were against wives or girl friends.

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And an American study[4] shows that only 53% of rapes are committed by total strangers.

The cultural connotation of 'home' as a safe and comfortable place, a refuge from the harsh world of work does not match up to the reality for many women. In fact, 'home' is the place where genuine accidents are common, and where some women and children live without the knowledge of the integrity of their own bodies. Because it happens within the privacy of the Englishman's castle, domestic violence is difficult to identify and to oppose. It is another example of the way women's collective experience has remained unshared and unacknowledged, because it is located in the home, rather than the public arena. One way of trying to estimate its occurrence is through divorce statistics. One study[5] shows that 90% of women suing for divorce had suffered 'repeated violence in marriage'. Another study[6] shows that 70% of women petitioning 'suffer serious brutality'. And these are just the severe cases.

There are people who persist in the belief that it does not happen, or it happens rarely and in extreme cases. I would suggest such people visit any casualty department, late on Saturday night, or the waiting room of a solicitor's practice that specialises in matrimonial cases, or talk to women who work in Women's Aid refuges. Many of us know women who have been assaulted by their spouses, though we may not know about it. It is very difficult to face up to, not least by the woman concerned. The resort to violence as a way of resolving difficulties is a physical manifestation of power, of the insistence of using all the methods available to you to achieve your ends. To be on the receiving end is to be degraded, to be forced to acknowledge that this is a relationship where one party has an authority over the other which is immediate and dangerous. If violence itself is not always resorted to, the knowledge that it has been, and can be, acts as a powerful method of social control.

Blaming women

The most staggering aspect of the question of violence against women is the way that the women involved are seen as responsible for it. Whether it is a rape, a murder, or a beating, the victim's 'part' or 'role' in the incident is always a subject of debate. When the Maws sisters killed their father who had been treating their mother brutally for years, the questions asked were why the mother did not leave, or get an injunction against him. The elder sister got three years. Recently, a man who killed his wife of twelve days after she

[1] Select Committee Report on Violence in Marriage, 1975.
[2] R and R Dobash, *Violence against Wives*, 1980.
[3] R and R Dobash, *Violence against Wives in Scotland* 1979.
[4] D J Mulvihill et al *Crimes of Violence* Washington, US Government Printing Office 1969 Vol II.
[5] Chester and Streather, 1972.
[6] Elston, Murch and Fuller, 1976.

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had taunted him with her past lovers, got only two years. I had a discussion with a 'progressive' man about this second example and his attitude was that she had provoked him, and that there were some things that were more than any man could stand. He did not consider that the man could have left the house, or the marriage. He seemed to accept that an aggrieved husband had the right to attack his wife if she needled him too much. The emphasis is almost always on how the woman contributed to the act, and *her* responsibilities: not to nag, or provoke or to step out of line, not to be in the street alone after dark, rather than on how the man should control his temper, take himself away from a situation where he might become violent, learn to face up to difficulties in relationships and negotiate, instead of flailing with his fists.

The saddest aspect of this is the way women themselves help perpetuate this view of where responsibility lies. We have become so used to being on guard, and to planning our movements to minimise the risks, that when we hear of an attack on a woman, our immediate thoughts are how we ourselves would have 'been more careful', avoided particular places, or been more cautious in who we let into the house. We put ourselves, mentally, in that situation and rehearse how we could have protected ourselves better. We are distracted by our concern for our own safety from the anger that properly attaches to such acts of violence. We discuss methods of protection rather than challenge the benefits that accrue to men from the acceptance of the current status of men and women. The benefits accrue to *all* men, though not all men practice or condone actual violence, just as benefits accrue to all white people from discrimination against blacks, even though not all whites actually practice discrimination. I am not arguing that women should not legitimately take avoiding action, to minimise the possibility of violence. I make the point that the responsibility for such acts when they occur should be properly located, with the person who perpetrates them.

Images of women

There are two images of women in our culture which are consistently portrayed. One is of women in relation to others identified by role ('mother', 'wife', 'housewife'). This variety of woman is depicted serving others, by cooking, washing, listening, comforting. The other is that of woman as object, to be looked at, with clothing, hairstyle and figure accentuated, and in its extreme form, in pornography, to conjure the fantasy of having something done to her. This reification of women is quite at odds with men's actual experience of women. Their wives, mothers, daughters, female workmates are nothing like these packaged images, but yet these images arouse strong feelings; gut reactions in men, sinking feelings in women. They fabricate a 'real woman' whose purpose in life is to provide services, both domestic and sexual.

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Images, of course, are chicken-and-egg material. They reflect current thinking, but also strengthen and legitimise it. They form models of behaviour and attitudes, they give messages of what is regarded as acceptable and appropriate. They are important in a consideration of violence against women because a man's view of women and his treatment of them are intertwined. A man's behaviour in a given situation is connected to his perception of the situation and the meaning he attaches to that behaviour. In his dealings with women, his behaviour will be mediated by his attitude to women which will, in general, be informed by cultural images.

The supposed role of women in acts of violence indicates what I propose is the nub of the whole, that pointing the finger at women absolves men of the responsibility for their own behaviour. It avoids any challenge to the role of men and the process of intimidation through violence. This seems to be a standard way of legitimising the status of one group at the expense of another; the assumptions of the dominant group are taken as read so that the dominated struggling to achieve equality have to challenge not just actions but the ideology that legitimates the action. We see this in the class struggle with the working class having to win the battle of ideas by challenging bourgeois actions and assumptions; with blacks challenging white power through black consciousness and the assertion of their various cultures; with gays having to insist that their expression of sexuality is legitimate and not unnaturally perverted. The misdeeds of the dominant section become the responsibility of the other, so that the status of the first group does not come under question. In the case of man the 'misdeeds' themselves serve to intimidate the lower status group which is also held responsible. No wonder there are Angry Women around!

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Rape

The idea of the ordinariness of the harassment of women is very hard for men, in particular, to come to terms with. Whilst acts of violence are not perceived to be everyday events, the frequency of them indicates that they are not abnormal. The Citizens Advice Bureau estimated in 1971 that its branches dealt with 25,000 battered women a year. Also, those acts of harassment which, whilst not actually assaults, are part of the reification of women (such as bottom-pinching, offensive remarks about appearance, and the assessment of a woman, seen but not known, as to whether or not she would make a suitable sexual partner) are certainly not abnormal but part of the day to day needling women have to learn to deal with. Another aspect of the ordinariness is that ordinary men do act violently. It is not restricted to men of extreme character, nor of a particular class. It seems to be a widely occurring phenomena, amongst both married and unmarried men, workers, trade unionists, supposedly feminist men, Marxists even.

Nowhere is the power of men over women more sharply demonstrated than in the act of rape. In rape, violence is combined with some act that has significant sexual connotation, but which is totally different from the way in which, in a relationship, sexuality expresses openness and intimacy. The assault is not a sexual act, but an act of aggression and hatred, humiliation and degradation. It is peculiarly powerful in its intention to terrorise and intimidate women. Rape is not an erotic act, nor the result of uncontrollable biological urges. It is often pre-planned, and where the victim is unknown, seems to be directed at a particular woman as the representative of womankind, rather than at that individual woman as a person.

Dress

One common 'excuse' for rape or harassment is that the woman was asking for it by the way she dressed. Looking good is something that most of us aspire to at sometime, in our own way. Just what we think 'looking good' means depends on our age, our peer group, our lifestyle and our personal taste, as well as fashions and what clothes are available

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in the shops. For conscious women, the question is that, given the way our clothing has been assessed in terms of its packaging of the sex object, how can we assert in our dress that we reject this packaging whilst at the same time refusing to deny our sexuality and without portraying ourselves as asexual? Do we disclaim clothes that identify us as women, and so, for example, abandon skirts? Do we refuse to accept the packaging meanings attached to (say) clothes that draw attention to our breasts and insist that the perceived sexual messages are in the mind of the onlooker and therefore his or her problem, not ours? Or do we decide to wear clothes that are comfortable but not calculated to show our bodies to best advantage? Whatever strategy we adopt, we are criticised, either for not looking feminine, for dressing provocatively, or for looking scruffy. Whatever you do is wrong in someone's eyes. For men, the situation is not so critical. They do not have the same extent of packaging to dissent from. Tight trousers are not regarded as provocative, scruffy clothes are part of the prerogative of deciding for himself what he wears. We can make indulgent remarks about how he is not able to sew buttons on, or iron his shirts. These failings do not detract from him in the way that similar failings would do for a woman.

The allowed and expected reactions to tightly fitting clothes are different, too. No woman attempts publicly to fondle the genitals of a man in tight trousers, yet some men feel free to pat a woman's bottom, even though she may be a stranger. From patting through pinching to mauling and forced physical attention, all without the active consent of the woman: these are but small steps down a slippery slope. A supposed justification for sliding down that slope is that deciding what is acceptable and what is unforgivable is no easy job for the man who has been encouraged to think that male biological urges are uncontrollable.

Single women

Whilst women in relationships with men are subject to domestic violence, or the threat of it, women on their own are not free from the fear of violence. They are outside the 'protectorate',[7] that is, outside the protection enjoyed by any woman who is attached to a man, and because they are outside it, fair game. Many single women value highly their independence and the means and ends of achieving it: an income of their own, choices about lifestyle, and the freedom to travel when and where they wish. When this independence is threatened by fears for their physical safety in a way they have no control over, a tremendous feeling of anger is generated towards the anonymous men concerned, that their hard won independence and their very style of living is at risk. No wonder, during the years of the Ripper, there were calls from some women for a curfew for men, mirroring and mimicking the police call for women to stay indoors.

The Ripper case

The case of murderer Peter Sutcliffe has demonstrated various aspects of violence against women. The first one I want to look at is the idea that men who attack women in the way he did must be psychopaths. The only positive thing about Sutcliffe's trial was that his plea of diminished responsibility was debunked by the jury; even the judge thought it was going a bit far to assert that someone could live normally through all those years, and have moments when 'the urge' overtook him. If this decision is part of a general sense in society that men should be held responsible for the attacks they perpetrate on women, then it is to be welcomed. What would be even more welcome is official criticism of the police handling of the affair, in attempting to insist that women accept responsibility for staying out of the Ripper's way and thus be denied their civil rights of free movement and association.

The second question concerns prostitutes. There was constant differentiation of the victims by counsel, police and press into 'innocents' and 'prostitutes', which implied that the prostitutes were somehow 'guilty'. The position of prostitutes in the sexual violence arena is interesting. These are women who are certainly not within the protectorate, at least whilst about their business, and indeed eschew any such protection by the use of their bodies in a straight commercial exchange. They retain some control of the transaction in a way which challenges male control of women's sexuality, and yet they depend on customer approval of the transaction to be effected. The very nature of their occupation renders them especially vulnerable to violence.

Another aspect of the case is how Sonia Sutcliffe was held to be involved. This supports my previous point, that the dominant group (men in this case) almost always manages somehow to blame someone else for its misdemeanours. If Sonia had not 'dominated' him, he would not have had to assert his masculine identity in this way. If Sonia had provided him with a 'happy marriage' and 'satisfying sex life', he would never have had to relieve his frustrations in this fashion. The twisting of situations to exonerate the man and to find some way of blaming the woman for the violence I find truly amazing. The Sonia syndrome, as I will call it, is ubiquitous and ripe for discrediting.

An explanation

My tentative explanation of what happened to Sutcliffe is this. He was exposed to all the socialisation messages about the status of women and their 'correct' place in society. He was as familiar as other men with all the material about women as sex objects: of prostitutes as women who challenged the accepted norms for the appropriate direction of sexuality and thereby particularly threatening to the ideas he had already absorbed about women as passive and serving partners. So far, his views were no different from those of many men similarly exposed to the consumer society view of women and

[7] Sarah Benton *Marxism Today*, February 1981.

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sexuality. He had had some experience of prostitutes, at a business level, and had been outmanoeuvred by one of them. Given that there must be many men with similar attitudes to women, and given the variety of response by different people to similar situations, it is not surprising that, sometimes, one of these men goes beyond what is formally sanctioned as reasonable behaviour, and exhibits his aggression and hatred in the manner Sutcliffe did. He had accepted the socialisation messages in perhaps an extreme form, and had not accepted or perceived the limits of socially condoned expression of them. Whilst it may have been prostitutes he originally focused on, it later became clear that all anonymous, vulnerable women outside the protectorate were his target. Sutcliffe's actions and attitudes were not unlike those of many men; but he took them beyond the bounds of socially acceptable limits.

We live in a society where violence is tolerated, depicted *ad nauseam*, and inflicted especially, though not exclusively, on women. I have tried to show that this violence against women is not explicable except in terms of the relations between men and women and their relative status. Whilst women are sure to confront it, this is an issue which should concern all people, and the degree to which men are prepared to become allies of women in the struggle against violence, harassment and the fear of violence which act as social controls, will be indicative of the degree to which men are prepared to take women seriously.

Women's campaigning

Of course, women have taken the initiative in campaigning around the issues. It is some years since battered women began to emerge from the obscurity of their homes, and we began to realise that this was a fairly common occurrence. Women's Aid refuges were the women's liberation movement's response to this, and have remained a practical demonstration of the movement's commitment to aiding women suffering from domestic violence. Relations between Women's Aid and local authorities (including Labour authorities) over the finding of suitable accommodation for refuges and their proper maintenance, and the permanent rehousing of women who have used them, have been problematic. 'Reclaim the Night' demonstrations have been held in many cities, to oppose demands that women should stay off the streets, and, being torchlit, have often turned into celebrations of women's dawning strength. They have sometimes run into difficulties with the police, ostensibly over routes.

The indignation and fury aroused by the suspended sentence given to the guardsman who sexually assaulted Carol Maggs (the judge said a prison sentence would damage his career) led to a re-examination of rape as a control mechanism. Existing Rape Crisis groups were vindicated for the strategy they had adopted, and new groups were set up, to provide support for sexually assaulted women, and education for the rest of us. It is from such groups that information on unreported rape and assault has been forthcoming.

Anti-pornography committees have been active, and Women Against Violence Against Women and Angry Women made themselves felt, after agreeing tactics at the Sexual Violence against Women conference in Leeds. Sex shops and cinema screens were favourite targets, and slogans painted on subways and walls must have been seen by thousands and thousands of people: 'Men off the Streets' and 'Angry Women' etc. The police responded with arrests and charges where they could, though in at least one city, the judge accepted that the anger behind the action was understandable if not justified, and was very lenient.

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It should not surprise us that the arm of the state, government, local and national, the police and the courts have been involved in these struggles. After all, women are challenging very fundamental structures in society.

Action by men

The initiative for these activities came mostly from radical and revolutionary feminists (that is, women who look to separatism as a strategy for liberation), but many socialist feminists have joined them, so that there is a good deal of unanimity within the women's liberation movement about the issues if not about the tactics to be adopted. Many of them are women-only activities and I know there has been much concern amongst men on the Left who wish to show solidarity but who feel frustrated that they have, on occasion, been prevented from joining marches, a traditional way of demonstrating support. Different ways of challenging the *status quo* are appropriate, because of the privatisation and domestication of much of women's experience, and they have to be worked out by the women who, because of the very nature of the issue, will only accept support with care, and on their terms. Whilst some activities are women-only, there are many ways in which men can support women. Men can act for example, by working with women against sexual harassment at work, by criticising men who behave in a sexist way instead of leaving it to the women, by challenging those jokes in pubs, and pin-ups wherever they occur (including in trade union journals).

But perhaps before involvement in campaigning, there is the need for both men and women to consider the status of women, and how it affects our day by day relationships, and to face up to our own attitudes to violence; in a nutshell, to do some consciousness raising. This has always been a source of great strength in the women's liberation movement, and the beginning of campaigning and theorising. Time and again, women have gone back to it, to reconsider some part of their experience which is hidden or incomprehensible. And again and again, it has proved to be a way of identifying the collective experience which had previously been taken as simply the isolated experience of particular women. The experience of violence is one such area. The first demand of women to men who wish to support them is to accept the need for women to organise separately, to listen, and to examine their own behaviour.

I have already mentioned a very specific way in which men can help counter the fear of violence on the streets by being aware of how they generate fear, however unintentionally and doing something to allay it, never approaching the woman. Cuts in public transport affect women particularly and restrict their ability to travel safely, especially at night. Also, anything that can be done within our organisations and workplaces, social situations and families to increase the status of women, and to challenge the myths about women being intellectually, organisationally and socially inferior are helpful.

The ways which are open to men and women to work around the issues of violence against women are different, because of the power differences between men and women. I have tried to show these power differences are, at root, the reason why, when it comes to violence, women are mostly on the receiving end and men are mostly on the giving end. There is a struggle going on, to identify how violence is used against women, and to challenge the legitimacy of it, and of the social framework and culture that condone it. It is a major struggle in the battle for women's liberation, and one that we will start to win when we know why it happens. □

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France has moved dramatically to the left. Over two decades of rightwing rule has been brought to an end. The Left government provides new possibilities for the trade unions.

Interview with Georges Seguy

Interview conducted by Jeff Apter

In France only about 23% of the workforce is organised in unions — about half the number in Britain. There are six recognised TUCs. Apart from the 600,000-strong teachers' umbrella organisation (FEN) and the managers' 300,000-strong CGC, there are 4 other bodies organising all kinds of workers. The 150,000-strong CFTC is close to the Catholic Church, and the 500,000-member FO was created by the Americans in the cold war as a split from the CGT. It is strongly anti communist. The two biggest are the 1 million-strong CFDT, which has recently moved to a more moderate position, and the CGT with a membership of 2 million. A former railway worker, Georges Seguy was sent to Auschwitz at the age of 16 for his resistance work. He has been a leader of the CGT's railway workers' union and, since 1967, general secretary of the CGT itself. He gave this exclusive interview to Marxism Today *at the end of June.*

As leader of France's biggest trade union body, what is your feeling about François Mitterrand's Presidential election victory on May 10 and the ensuing Left victory at the General Election in June?

They are both events of great importance, not only for France but also for Europe, and indeed, the world. They have created a completely new situation in our country. The workers wanted to be rid of the power of the right wing that has dominated the country's life for a generation and they have succeeded by electing François Mitterrand and a Left government. As a trade union organisation of the Left, the CGT worked for the victory and we intend grasping the opportunities thus offered to the working people and the country to bring about real change.

In this new situation what are the main questions facing workers in France today?

There are two types of problem. Firstly, to win the far reaching reforms necessary to bring about lasting change and secondly, to obtain satisfaction of the workers' most pressing demands. I am thinking particularly about a higher minimum wage, greater attention to low wages generally and a narrowing of the often anarchistic and unjust wage differentials between the highest paid manager and the lowest grades. We also want a progressive lowering of the working week to 35 hours with an initial reduction of two hours a week. Other immediate demands are earlier retirement and steps to protect the purchasing power of wages and all kinds of pensions and benefits.

The measures that have been adopted in the Presidential decrees and by the emergency session of parliament in July are a positive step in this direction and negotiations have started with the employers' confederation on reducing working hours. However, these negotiations are already very tough. But this is not all. There is also a whole backlog of other questions needing negotiation especially with regard to unemployment such as vocational training and investment — particularly in the public sector and the nationalised industries — to create the maximum number of jobs as soon as possible.

So for the first time for many years the CGT is negotiating with the government.

Yes, it is an entirely new situation for us. For 34 years we have had a succession of hostile governments which have excluded the CGT from negotiations. Not only was our organisation discriminated against but our rank and file has been systematically victimised and even hounded before the courts.

Today we are at last able to fully play our role as trade unionists in a positive, constructive and cooperative way with the government. We are now in a position to attempt to settle a certain number of outstanding social issues which have been continually ignored by the outgoing administration.

We are in direct discussion with the new President who is giving the trade union movement the importance it deserves. These discussions include international questions of concern to us as trade unionists. We are also in close contact with the Prime Minister, a simple telephone call sufficing for a meeting to be arranged, and we are also in touch with all the ministeries dealing with social questions.

An era of negotiations is therefore opening before us. We are aware of the new opportunities but also of the limits. The opportunities are new because the government is no longer an adversary but a partner, and there are limits because of the national and international economic situation that has been inherited and also because the policies of the new President and his administration do not go as far as the CGT's programme.

We think, however, that it is possible to win meaningful social advances and progressive reforms.

You say that in the new government the CGT now has a partner rather than an adversary. Does not this create problems with regard to the CGT's independence?

We do not conceive our relationship with the government as one of a party participating in a coalition, and therefore pledged to be disciplined in carrying out the government's programme, but as a trade union organisation. We therefore remain entirely in control of our own decisions. There must be respect for our independence and for our autonomy of action.

We do not oppose the government but neither are we giving it unconditional support. We want to help bring about a constructive solution to outstanding problems but within the framework of our activities as a sovereign body. The CGT is extremely jealous of its independence and we want to keep it. This means maintaining our right to criticise the government from time to time. We want to use all our weight to help tip the scales in the right direction but we also want to be a counter-balance when there are things with which we do not agree. This is how we see our role as an independent trade union movement.

It is clear that the CGT has always worked for a Left government but before

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the Presidential election it was accused of supporting Communist Party Secretary Georges Marchais' candidature without mentioning his name.

I've already explained our attitude to trade union independence. But it is well known that we are a trade union body fighting for the interests of the working class. This means that we are not neutral with respect to the keynote economic, social and political problems of the day that have a bearing on the trade union movement.

Before the first round of the Presidential election on April 26 we believed it was the CGT's duty to remind the workers of the organisation's views as to the conditions necessary to bring about genuine change as seen by the CGT's own programme. This was interpreted by some as being an appeal to vote for the PCF's Presidential candidate.

In fact there are always similarities and even parallel positions in the CGT's and PCF's respective programmes. All this means is that of today's political parties, the Communists get the nearest to the CGT's own, independent class positions.

We have always stressed that this is not a phenomenon that we have created but a distinguishing feature of the history of the French working class movement. It is a reality and we would be very happy if we could say the same for the other Left parties especially with regard to the Socialist Party's manifesto. However, having said that, even if there are not as many similarities between the Socialists and ourselves as compared with the Communists, there are enough for progress to be made.

The situation since Mitterrand's election is entirely new. And appointment of four Communist ministers to the cabinet on June 25 changes it even further. What is the CGT's view as to the presence of Communist ministers?

Everybody is speaking about it as an event of great national and even international historical significance. I think they are right. The CGT welcomes this great event because we have always fought for the victory of the united Left forces. So we welcome the constitution of a united Left government in which all the Left parties are represented, including Communists.

Communist ministers are now in government for the first time since 1947. Some people were saying that the day such a thing happened it would be the apocalypse. Well, there is still bread in the baker's, newspapers at the newsagent's and the underground is still operating. There have not been any reports of the police breaking down the door at 5 in the morning! So life is continuing as usual — and even getting better as there is now the prospect of real constructive social progress.

I note also that people have said that France's foreign alliances were going to fall apart the day Communist ministers were appointed. But all is going well. France's allies — West Germany, Great Britain and the United States, to mention but a few — seem to be adopting attitudes that are more or less realistic with regard to the representatives of an important part of the French electorate in a Left government.

A further aspect of the fact that there are now Communist ministers is that there will certainly be repercussions, within the West European trade union movement. There could be consequences for the cohesion of the trade union movement including within the framework of the European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC). I think that the realistic and reasonable trade union leaders will take account of this new situation with regard to the CGT's long outstanding application for membership of the ETUC. I should remind you that this was not accepted at the ETUC's June 1980 Executive Committee meeting.

One of the most important features of the last few months has been the support — separately, but nevertheless, support in the same direction — of both the CGT and the second biggest trade union centre, the CFDT for a Left government. The unity of the French trade union movement has always been a thorny problem and since the CFDT's rightward swing in 1979 relationships have not been good. Surely the new situation provides fresh opportunities for unity.

We have always said that one of the main causes of the divisions between workers, between democrats, at both the political and trade union levels is anti-communism. To the extent that the entry of Communist ministers into the government deals a mighty blow to anti-communism, new conditions exist for unity between the political parties and this cannot fail to have positive consequences on the trade union movement.

Even if differences between the CGT and the CFDT have not yet enabled real and constructive relationships at leadership level to be made it is clear that the climate that has been created and the entirely new situation today are conducive to bringing about new prospects for unity.

Another positive feature of the recent period has been an increase in trade union membership, thus reversing the trend of the last few years.

Yes. It is obvious that the new situation has produced increased feelings of confidence among the workers. In the factories the workers are discussing more. Production is suffering a little, but this is only temporary. So there is renewed confidence and enthusiasm. Where CGT branches — which are based at the workplace — are particularly active, recruitment is taking place. We want to convince the workers that it is not enough to demonstrate their satisfaction at the new situation but to join the union as the CGT has an important part to play if genuine change is to be won. I can say that trade union activities are picking up and there is a revitalisation of the trade union movement as a whole.

You spoke earlier of the refusal by the ETUC to give membership to the CGT. Are you still trying to get into that organisation? And what is the CGT's attitude to West European trades unionism today?

By making that decision, the ETUC is depriving itself of the most representative, the biggest and the most militant trade union centre in France. Not only that, but also an organisation which has played a keynote role in the victory of the Left in France. If this role of the CGT is not taken into consideration by the ETUC, there is the risk that the European organisation will appear as being hesitant in welcoming the Left advance in France and the perspectives that are opening up for French workers. It will be interesting to see the attitude of the ETUC's affiliates with regard to the changes that have just taken place and to the CGT's action in bringing it about.

Speaking of Europe, the CGT has come out against enlargement of the Common Market. At the beginning of the seventies there was opposition to the Market's enlargement through the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark, and more recently, against the inclusion of Greece. The CGT is also against the application for membership of Portugal and Spain. What is your view of the EEC today?

As long as Europe is dominated by giant financial and industrial interests and as long as it remains the club of the multinational companies, it cannot play a progressive role in the interests of the workers, and in fact, in the interests of the peoples making up the Community.

We said as much when there were only six countries involved. When they became the Nine we said that if the Common Market does

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not fundamentally change the Europe of the Nine will be no better than that of the Six. Today we say that the same applies to the Ten and to the Twelve as long as powerful capitalist interests continue to call the tune within the European Economic Community.

I am not, of course, against the idea of European cooperation but in the same way that we have struggled in France against the forces of big capital, we are Europeans and are fighting for a Europe which is more representative of the workers, of the forces of progress and democracy and which lends itself to better economic, trade union and political cooperation. This is why it is natural that the workers and their trade unions act to build a new Europe which is one that is resolutely against the power of big business.

But is it really possible to change what you call this club of the multinational companies into a workers' Europe, or will it be necessary to destroy it and build something else in its place?

In the present state of affairs it is difficult to conceive of the destruction of the Common Market and its replacement by something else, but it is surely possible to bring about democratic reforms giving the progressive forces — and particularly the workers — a new position and new opportunities enabling them to win decisions commensurate with their interests.

We do not advocate that France leave the Market but believe that it should be reformed and democratised

In Great Britain, both the Communist Party, and now the Labour Party are for withdrawal from the EEC. A growing number of trade unions have also adopted this policy and it is possible that the September Trades Union Congress will adopt a policy of straight withdrawal. The opinion polls also show an increasing number who think that Britain ought to get out. Do you think that Britain's withdrawal would help your aim of reforming the EEC?

There are many similarities in the positions of those who wish to leave the EEC in Great Britain and with our views. We do not advocate that France leave the Market but believe, as I said, that it should be reformed and democratised to look after the workers' interests. I do not think I ought to make a judgement on something which should be left to the sovereign decision of the British people. I really think that a Europe existing on totally different bases will enable a different future than that dominated by big business. For us, withdrawal of France is an extreme solution.

What is the CGT's present relationship with the British trade union movement? I am talking about ties between the TUC and the CGT at leadership level as well as those between individual unions.

There are excellent relations between many TUC and CGT affiliates: railways, public services, transport, engineering to name but a few. We attach the greatest interest and importance to these relationships which enable frequent exchanges of experiences and opinions on problems of common interest. As I said, we value such ties but they are not yet operative at the level they should be, at the level of the leadership of the two trade union centres.

It is true that over the last few years I have often met TUC leaders including Len Murray with whom I have talked many times since he has been General Secretary. But I am still looking forward to the TUC accepting our invitation to visit the CGT in France. Such a meeting at such a level would be mutually beneficial, I am confident, to both sides.

What is your view of the trade union and political situation in Poland?

The accumulation of errors in the past, including by the Polish trade union movement, has brought about circumstances resulting in today's situation. The CGT is for the unity of the trade union movement in France so we cannot be happy that there has been a split in the unions in Poland. But it was hard to do otherwise in a very difficult situation. Poland is going through a period in which the economy is in dire straits and which requires immense efforts and a spirit of responsibility by all Polish patriots if things are to get better. I am happy to note that this spirit of realism and cooperation has resulted in consultations between the Polish government and Solidarity which has meant that Poland has, to date, been able to tackle its problems.

We have thought for a long time that the extension of the role of the trade unions in the socialist countries, through independent activities and democratic elections for all positions of leadership from the branch committee to the top executive, is necessary. It is commensurate with a genuine need which is in conformity with the normal and necessary development of socialist democracy. The CGT's ideas on the role of the unions in the socialist countries have been published in important documents in 1971 and 1977 and at the World Federation of Trade Union's 1978 Congress.

This position can in no way be tied up with the opinions of some politicians and trade unionists in France and other western countries, but also in Poland, who see in what they call 'free trade unions' the possibility of waging war against socialism, or, in other words, to create opposition political parties through the trade unions.

The CGT's Executive Committee has expressed its wish that the Polish workers, their trade unions and all progressives manage to bring about, through negotiation, the revitalisation of their country for which they are striving and find the best possible solutions guaranteeing the unity and interests of the working class and ensuring its active role in society which is the *sine qua non* for building socialism in Poland.

So we sincerely hope that the country will soon find its economic and political stability and will be able to continue its efforts in the workers' interests and, indeed, for the development of socialism in Poland.

A top-level CGT delegation was in Poland at the beginning of the year and further contacts have taken place between the CGT and the Polish trade union movements since then. What, if any, is the CGT's relationship with Solidarity?

We have a good relationship with Solidarity, and as you say, there have already been several exchanges. We also maintain contact with the branch unions and with the unaffiliated unions and we are happy to note that on the basis of an agreement with the Polish government, all sections of the Polish trade union movement were represented in the Polish delegation to the annual conference of the International Labour Organisation which ended in Geneva at the end of June.

Lech Walesa has already made several trips abroad. Are there any plans to visit you in France?

A delegation of Solidarity lead by Walesa was due to visit us this spring but the situation in Poland meant that the trip had to be posponed at the last minute. With Solidarity's Congress due to take place soon, I hope that Walesa's visit will be able to take place later on in the year.

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Monty Johnstone

Is the Marxist Tradition Democratic?

No area of struggle or debate is more crucial to Marxists than that of democracy. The appearance of a new collection of essays entitled *Marxism and Democracy* and published by Lawrence and Wishart (pb, £3.50) is calculated to arouse interest and anticipation among readers of *Marxism Today*. Its highly contentious viewpoints will leave none of them indifferent. Many of these ideas have been gaining currency in certain circles on the Left and call for full and serious consideration.

In his introduction, Alan Hunt sets the tone with his suggestion that 'socialists and Marxists can be charged with failing to take democracy seriously'. And he raises the question 'whether the theoretical framework of Marxism, especially in its most potent form developed by Lenin, has been adequate to the task of confronting "the problem of democracy"' (p7). The reader is left in no doubt that he and most of the other authors believe that it has not. However, after having hacked away substantial elements of Marxism regarded by its founders as pivotal, they can hardly be said to have provided us with much of a coherent new theoretical framework to take its place.

Marxism is not a religion but a critical scientific method of understanding and changing the world. Alan Hunt is therefore perfectly right to deplore a defensive reaction to 'the challenge to crucial aspects in the existing state of Marxist theory' in terms of protecting 'Marxist orthodoxy' and thereby failing 'to take issue with the challenging theoretical and political problems posed' (p11).

However, it seems to me that an opposite tendency should also be rejected: that of erecting the scaffolding of a new orthodoxy, which presents a selective and one-sided version of traditional Marxism and particularly Leninism, to which it then proceeds to counterpose an equally selective and one-sided version of Gramsci or Rosa Luxemburg; which rides out to hunt down and expose 'economism' and 'reductionism' in the same catch-all spirit as was once fashionable in scenting out and denouncing 'revisionism'; and which exhibits a predilection for abstruse theorising rather than developing theory on the basis of a rigorous study of specifically located historical experience.[1]

Such tendencies are reflected in varying degrees, I think, in a number of the essays in this book, which comprises papers first presented at a conference organised by the Sociology Group of the Communist Party in December 1978. They are focused on bourgeois democracy as it exists in advanced capitalist countries rather than on problems of socialist democracy.

Curious omission

A most curious omission for a book challenging 'the theoretical framework of Marxism' is the failure to give proper consideration to the views of Marx himself. In a work abounding in quotations, including from Gramsci (to whom a whole chapter is rightly devoted) and the interesting but avowedly non-Marxist Foucault (extensively cited in Colin Mercer's paper), Marx is quoted in the whole book . . . twice! This is hardly accidental. It is in keeping with the suggestion that we are dealing with a topic on which Marx had little of importance to offer and Marxism needs to be rescued from 'a pervasive and disabling set of dichotomies' (p101). Indeed, without anywhere attempting to examine what Marx and Engels actually did write on the subject, Colin Mercer even speaks of Marx 'collapsing the word and reality of democracy into . . . its class form' and excluding 'its possible connotaton with other determinants' (pp110, 108). As against this phantasmagoria, Bob Jessop, referring to Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Law'*, shows that in fact democracy for Marx involved the control of officialdom through specific mechanisms of representation and accountability culminating ultimately in the complete self-government of the people transcending the separation between state and civil society (p57). Such popular self-government, unbridled by bureaucracy, constituted the essence of Marx's democratic objective throughout his life. It was highlighted by him in 1871, in his *Civil War in France*, as the most important characteristic of the Paris Commune, which he and Engels saw as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Colin Mercer totally misunderstands Marx's *Critique*. It is only necessary to read this seminal work to see that it is simply not true, as he alleges, that Marx's 'primary focus' in it was on the '*class* character' (p108) of democracy against Hegel whom he presents as a champion of bourgeois democracy. Marx's 'primary focus' was much more basic. It was the refutation of Hegal's monarchist and paternalistic positions, which opposed freely elected representative assemblies 'with the miserable arrogance of the *Prussian* civil service which in its bureaucratic stupidity looks down on the "self-confidence" of the "people's own subjective opinion".' To this Marx counterposed his abiding conception of democracy as 'the sovereignty of the people'.[2]

These were the same 'ultra-democratic opinions', as the Prussian censor called them[3], that Marx had expressed so forcefully the previous year in his first articles which, significantly enough, were on the freedom of the press. In them he made an eloquent plea for democratic liberties and a denunciation of all censorship as a 'law of suspicion against freedom' which remains unsurpassed to this day. 'Lack of freedom', he argued, was 'the real mortal danger for mankind . . . You cannot enjoy the advantages of a free press without putting up with its inconveniences. You cannot pluck the rose without its thorns'. For Marx, there was 'a basic defect in the nature of censorship which no law can remedy'.[4]

These profoundly democratic principles were subsequently to constitute a fundamental part of his outlook as a fully-fledged Marxist, after he had come to envisage their extension and combination with the social and economic freedom that could only be obtained by a change in the class basis of society.[5] As Hal Draper writes in his extremely valuable study of Marx's theory of revolution, 'Marx's socialism (communism) as a political programme may be most quickly defined, from the Marxist standpoint, as *the complete democratisation of society*, not merely its political forms.'[6]

Lenin's 'economism'

If the present authors largely ignore Marx, a number of them are concerned to take Lenin to task for his alleged 'economism'. Their definition of this term is nowhere explicitly given. In the case of Barry Hindess, who contributes an essay on 'Marxism and Parliamentary Democracy', such criticism of Lenin flows from a rejection of the whole materialist conception of history and politics. He proceeds from positions developed by himself and his co-authors in *Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today*, where it is asserted that 'to deny economism . . . is to maintain that political and ideological struggles cannot be conceived as the struggles of economic classes'.[7]

Barry Hindess rejects *a priori* the class character of democracy, since he disputes the possibility of causal connections — as distinct from possible conjunctural convergences — between political institutions, organisations and ideologies, on the one hand, and

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> A most curious omission for a book challenging 'the theoretical framework of Marxism' is the failure to give proper consideration to the views of Marx himself

classes, on the other, even in the complex forms posited by historical materialism.

Alan Hunt does not commit himself on Hindess's views on the relationship between 'politics' and 'economics', which he sees as constituting 'perhaps the most basic theoretical problem confronting contemporary Marxism' (p11). The 'economism' for which he criticises Lenin arises from his having allegedly 'advanced a strict relationship between stages of economic development and their associated forms of state' (p9). To illustrate his thesis that for Lenin 'the political form is derived from and determined by the economic stage or level of development', he ascribes to him (p10) the following schema:

Mode of production	*Form of state*
Capitalism	Parliamentary democracy
Monopoly capitalism	'Bureaucratic-military state'
Socialism	Dictatorship of the proletariat

This is highly misleading. Talk of such a 'strict relationship' is contradicted by Alan Hunt's own recognition of Lenin's emphasis that 'the rule of a class can take a wide variety of political forms', which in the capitalist case have included monarchical, fascist and parliamentary democratic systems (p8). Nor did the author of *State and Revolution* suggest that monopoly capitalism necessarily *replaced* parliamentary democracy by a 'bureaucratic-military state'. Indeed in the main imperialist countries like Britain, France, Germany and the USA he saw the two *combined*.

In his polemic in 1915-16 against Pyatakov's and Bukharin's 'imperialist economism', Lenin went to great pains to refute the idea that imperialism was an economic mechanism with strictly determined political consequences. Alan Hunt quotes Lenin's statement that the political superstructure of monopoly capitalism (imperialism) 'is the change *from* democracy *to* political reaction. Democracy corresponds to free competition. Political reaction corresponds to monopoly'.[8] But he has failed to notice that, on the same page, the Bolshevik leader added: 'The achievement of democracy is in the same sense, and to the same degree, harder under imperialism (compared with pre-monopoly capitalism), as the achievement of a republic, a militia, popular election of officials etc (all immediate demands in the Party programme — MJ). *There can be no talk of democracy being "economically" unachievable*'.[9]

These two passages complement each other. They bring us to the heart of Lenin's Marxism with its grasp of the dynamic relations between economically determined tendencies and conscious political intervention capable of acting on them. It was from this angle that he criticised those who could not 'solve the problem of how to link the advent of imperialism with *the struggle for reforms and democracy* — just as the economism of blessed memory (combated by Lenin in the Russian labour movement at the turn of the century — MJ) could not link the advent of capitalism with the struggle for democracy'.[10]

Lenin and bourgeois democracy

Lenin wrote in 1916 that 'the socialist revolution is not a single act, it is not one battle on one front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, ie, on all questions of economics and politics, battles that can only end in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie . . . In the same way as there can be no victorious socialism that does not practise full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for its victory over the bourgeoisie without an all-round, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy'.[11]

Alan Hunt is legitimately critical of some of Lenin's one-sidedly polemical statements after the October Revolution which presented bourgeois democracy as simply democracy for the bourgeoisie and its denial to the working class (pp12ff).[12] Nevertheless he goes too far when he says that 'what is absent from Lenin is any recognition of the contradictory character of bourgeois democracy' (p13).

Precisely in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, written in October/November 1918, on which Alan Hunt bases his argument, Lenin wrote of 'the crying contradiction between the *formal* equality proclaimed by the "democracy" of the capitalists and the thousands of *real* limitations and subterfuges which make the proletarians *wage slaves*'.[13] And when Lenin, in the same pamphlet, spoke of bourgeois democracy as 'a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism' and demanded its 'extension'[14], he was recognising the positive elements in its contradictory nature.

It is true that from 1917 Lenin did equate the institutional form of parliamentary democracy with bourgeois rule and that of Soviets with working class power. These positions were taken up at a time when, in Russia in particular, the principal class forces were grouping respectively around these particular institutions. Marxism has no place for 'sacred cows', and Lenin may justifiably be criticised for making exaggerated generalisations from the contemporary situation.[15] There is however no basis for attributing his views in that

[1] cf Lenin's reference to Marx's theory as '*a summing up of experience*, illuminated by a profound philosophical conception of the world and a rich knowledge of history.' (Lenin, *Collected Works* Moscow/London 1960-70, hereafter *LCW* Volume 25 p407. Emphasis in original). The most extreme expression of the opposite viewpoint is that of Barry Hindess, one of the contributors to the present work, who wrote: 'The study of history is not only scientifically but also politically valueless'. (B Hindess & P Hirst *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* London 1975 p312). In the words of Henry Ford I: 'History is bunk!'

[2] K Marx/F Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London 1975ff), hereafter *MECW* Volume 3 pp124-7, 28-29. Emphasis in original.

[3] Quoted by A Cornu, *Karl Marx et Friedrich Engels* (Paris 1958) Volume 2 p102.

[4] *MECW* Volume 1 pp161, 164, 110 (slightly modified translation after Marx/Engels, *Werke* Berlin 1956-68 Volume 1 p4).

[5] cf 'On the Jewish Question' (Autumn 1843) *MECW* Volume 3 pp146-174.

[6] Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* (Monthly Review Press, New York/London 1977) Volume 1 Part 1 p282. Emphasis in original.

[7] A Cutler, B Hindess, P Hirst and A Hussain, *Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today* (London 1977) Volume 1 p236.

[8] 'A Caricature of Marxism' (August-October 1916) *LCW* Volume 23 p43. Emphasis in original.

[9] *Ibid*. My emphasis.

[10] 'The Nascent Trend of Imperialist Economism' (August-September 1916) *ibid* p15. Emphasis in original.

[11] 'The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination' (January-February 1916) *LCW* Volume 22 p144.

[12] He contrasts them with Marx's approach in *The Class Struggles in France* *MECW* Volume 10 p79.

[13] *LCW* Volume 28 p246. Emphasis in original. Translation slightly modified after Lenin, *Sochineniya* (Moscow/Leningrad 1929) Volume XXIII pp348-9.

[14] *Ibid*, pp243, 280.

[15] See M Johnstone, 'Lenin and Revolution', in E J Hobsbawm etc, editors *Storia del Marxismo* (Einaudi, Turin 1980), Volume 3 pp89-113, where the change in Lenin's position on this question in 1917 is critically analysed.

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period to a fundamental 'essentialism' (to use Hindess's term) or 'economism' in his outlook. Indeed, up until then he had held, like Engels, that the democratic republic was the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[16]

The dictatorship of the proletariat

Equally mistaken is Alan Hunt's idea that for Lenin the dictatorship of the proletariat derived from a socialist mode of production. Quite the reverse is true. Lenin took over the concept from Marx and Engels for whom it meant the political supremacy of the proletariat used 'to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state, ie, of the proletariat organised as the ruling class'.[17] The dictatorship of the proletariat was established in Russia by the October Revolution as a means of progressively advancing through state capitalism under the control of the workers' state towards a socialist mode of production which Lenin saw as a long way off.

Alan Hunt goes on to assert that from Lenin's (like Engels') understanding of democracy as a form of state, it 'follows that political competition is a characteristic of the bourgeois state and is regarded as playing no necessary part in a workers' state' (p16). Actually this follows neither in logic nor in historical fact! It is directly contradicted by many of Lenin's statements and actions both before and after the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship in Russia. On the eve of the October Revolution he was insisting: 'In free countries the people are ruled through an open struggle between parties and by free agreement between these parties'.[18] And, after the revolution, in January 1918, we find him arguing the superiority of the Soviet system on the grounds that under it 'if the working people are dissatisfied with their party they can elect other delegates, hand power to another party and change the government without any revolution at all'.[19] And in 1919 and 1920, on Lenin's initiative, the leaders of the opposition Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary Parties were invited as consultative delegates to the Congress of Soviets, where they were enabled to table resolutions critical of the Soviet government and make speeches attacking its policies. The subsequent suppression of these parties at the time of the Kronstadt Revolt of 1921 was conceived as an emergency measure to meet a dire threat to the Soviet state. Only after Lenin's death was it perverted by Stalin into a matter of 'Marxist' principle.[20]

Assessing Gramsci

Gramsci's fecund ideas are of great importance for a Marxist study of democracy and deservedly receive considerable attention in this book. Ann Showstack Sassoon's chapter, 'Gramsci: A New Concept of Politics and the Expansion of Democracy', reflects her extensive studies of the Italian Communist leader and in general serves as a useful introduction to a large and complex subject. However, outlining Gramsci's ideas without a single reference to Lenin, she suggests an originality which is not always warranted, notably in the case of his critique of liberal democracy and his conception of new forms of representative democracy (in the shape of a Soviet system). Nor is it made clear how far Gramsci's ideas on popular democratic control over politics and social development, to which she refers without giving sources, should be related to the periods before or after the working class has taken state power, or to both.

More serious is the unwarranted way in which two other papers counterpose Gramsci to Lenin. Colin Mercer, who treats Gramsci as if he were the first Marxist with anything worthwhile to say about democracy, writes that 'Gramsci's "integral state" represents an advance on the Leninist analysis of the moment of "force" by giving a more adequate theoretical weighting to the moment of "consent"' (p117). Gramsci's 'integral state' refers to an enlarged definition of the 'state' to include 'civil society' with its private institutions, which in prison he used along with the more usual one denoting only the administrative organs of political society.[21]

The 'moment of "force"' is presumably the October Revolution which Gramsci welcomed as intensely popular and creative in character and described as a 'decisive turning point in the history of the art and science of politics'.[22] It was directly preceded by more than six months of intensive and successful struggle by the Bolsheviks to win a majority in the country. Explicitly and frequently repudiating the Blanquist idea of a minority imposing its will on the people, Lenin stressed that 'we Bolsheviks must patiently and perseveringly explain our views to the workers and peasants'. And he insisted that 'we have always known and repeatedly pointed out that the bourgeoisie maintains itself in power *not* only by force but also by virtue of the lack of class consciousness and organisation, the routinism and

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downtrodden state of the masses'.[23]

Gramsci: Soviets *v* Parliament

Alan Hunt contrasts Lenin's 'counter-opposition of bourgeois and direct democracy', which 'was the expression of state forms (constituent assembly *v* dictatorship of the proletariat)' to 'the counter-opposition in the tradition of Gramsci', which he claims 'is not the opposition between state forms but the struggle for hegemony that is fought out prior to the transformation of state power itself' (p15).

This is inaccurate as far as both Lenin and Gramsci are concerned. Firstly, because Gramsci was at one with Lenin and the international communist movement of his day in continuously counterposing parliamentary to soviet state forms and in calling for 'the success of the revolutionary effort directed towards installing a proletarian dictatorship embodied in the system of councils, outside and against parliament'.[24] In prison he continued to express his belief in the soviet as against the parliamentary system.[25] It is unhistorical and impermissible to attribute to Gramsci Western Communist positions only evolved after his time. As Togliatti said in 1958: 'The study of new questions now confronting us in our daily political struggle requires new concrete factual notions which we do not find in Gramsci. He remains however a light that illumines our road. He went as far as he could'.[26]

Secondly, Gramsci, like Lenin, saw the struggle for hegemony as belonging both to the period prior to and the period after state power had been won. 'One cannot aim, before the conquest of the state,' he wrote, 'to change completely the consciousness of the entire working class. To do so would be utopian, because class consciousness as such is only changed when the way of living of the class itself has been changed; in other words, when the proletariat has become a ruling class and has at its disposal the apparatus of production and exchange and the power of the state'.[27]

Gramsci was to make an extremely valuable and original contribution in evolving the conception of hegemony in relation to Western Europe in conditions of developed civil society and parliamentary institutions quite different from what had prevailed in Tsarist Russia. In the last period of his life Lenin urged Western Communists to seek out 'nationally specific' forms of transition to working class power. This was to become a major theme in Gramsci's work reflected in his conception of a long haul 'war of position' as 'the only form possible in the West'.[28] Gramsci's ideas in this sphere do indeed mark an advance on Lenin, but they were developed on the basis of, not in opposition to, Lenin's conception of hegemony. This was fully acknowledged by Gramsci who wrote in prison of 'the theoretical-practical principle of hegemony' constituting Lenin's 'greatest theoretical contribution to the philosophy of praxis' (Marxism).[29]

Revolutionary process today

Western Communists have since the days of Lenin and Gramsci, and in very different circumstances, developed the conception of a revolutionary process in which, as Alan Hunt and other authors show, already under capitalism the transformation of democracy is begun with mass struggle compelling it 'to yield an expanding area to popular power' (p15). Such a perspective is set out in broad outline in the present edition of the Communist Party's programme, *The British Road to Socialism*. No one can doubt that it needs further theoretical elaboration, which has an important contribution to make to its practical credibility, development and realisation.

As Phil Jones writes in his essay: 'There are real structural and political obstacles that operate to prevent the realisation of a wide range of projects with transformative potential. Such obstacles are in need of clear and careful investigation in which the conceptual apparatus of Marxism will doubtless play a vital role' (p146). The major one of these seems to me to be the problem on which Popular Unity came to grief in Chile: how to meet and overcome the resistance of the ruling class seeking to protect its power and privileges before it is too late and — no doubt with help from outside — prepared from its entrenched and key positions in the economy and in what Gramsci called 'the apparatus of state coercive power'[30] to resort to measures ranging from economic sabotage to armed rebellion. Bob Jessop, stating that 'it would be necessary to democratise the repressive state apparatus in a number of ways', appends a candid footnote: 'I freely admit to the weakness of this statement on the RSAs (repressive state apparatuses — MJ) and hope to return to this question in subsequent work' (pp74, 80).

> A great deal is written about the transformation of the state in general — often in convoluted language and élite jargon, which is hardly a good basis for wide participation

Marked contrast

Stuart Hall's excellent final chapter of the book stands in marked contrast to the others in terms both of its subject matter and of its theoretical method. Unlike them, it uses theoretical tools for undertaking a 'concrete analysis' of nationally and conjuncturally specific phenomenon in the best Leninist and Gramscian tradition, with which he identifies himself and on which he draws to good effect.

As in other recent writings of his, he is here studying and exposing the attempts of the radical Thatcherite Right in the present crisis to build up a populist base for a movement towards a more authoritarian regime ('authoritarian statism'), whilst preserving parliamentary democracy. He shows how '"Thatcherism" has worked directly on the terrain of popular ideologies' (p179). His essay demonstrates the

[16] See eg, 'On the Slogan for a United States of Europe' (August 1915) *LCW* Volume 21 p342. See Engels' Critique of the Erfurt Programme draft (1891) in Marx/Engels, *Werke* Volume 22 p235.

[17] *Communist Manifesto*, *MECW* Volume 6 p504.

[18] 'Lessons of the Revolution' (September 1917) *LCW* Volume 25 pp227-8.

[19] Replies to Questions at Railwaymen's Congress (January 1918) *LCW* Volume 26 p498.

[20] See M Johnstone, 'Socialism, Democracy and the One Party System', *Marxism Today*, August, September, November 1970.

[21] cf A Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London 1973), hereafter *SPN* p12.

[22] *Ibid*, p235.

[23] Report to Petrograd Bolshevik Organisation (May 1917) *LCW* Volume 41 p433; Letters on Tactics (April 1917) *LCW* Volume 24 pp46-7. Emphasis in original.

[24] 'The Coming Confrontation' (November 1917) in A Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1910-1920* (London 1977) p129.

[25] See *SPN* pp xci, 193-4.

[26] P Togliatti, *On Gramsci and Other Writings* (London 1979) p206.

[27] Introduction to Party School (Spring 1925) in A Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1921-1926* (London 1978) p288.

[28] *SPN* p237.

[29] *Ibid*, p365. See also Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State* (London 1980), where Gramsci's Leninism is very solidly established.

[30] *SPN* p12. This apparatus, argued Gramsci, is 'constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed'.

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crucial importance for the Left of 'the deepening of democratic life and the widening of popular-democratic struggle' on all fronts against the most serious threat from the 'thoroughly renovated and "reformed"' Right (p159).

Class character of state

Apart from Stuart Hall's essay, *Marxism and Democracy* is largely lacking in concrete analysis of present day reality, partly because some of the contributors do not see this as the function of theory. A great deal is written about the transformation of the state in general — often in convoluted language and élite jargon, which is hardly a good basis for the wide participation in democratic debate that is called for! However, no serious attempt is made to examine relevant historical experience, and the specific problems that most require elaboration and elucidation are evaded or inadequately explored.

> Unfortunately however too many of them are throwing out vital organs of the Marxist baby with the dogmatic bathwater

Barry Hindess, whilst making some useful points about forms of democratic supervision over the state apparatus, says that they 'must be considered as, or as containing, political forces in their own right' subject to constraints and control by political institutions (p47) but not by a dominant class. (He prefers institutional 'reductionism' to class 'reductionism'!) In a number of other essays the class character of the state and the tenacity of the central state apparatus as a bulwark of capitalist power are ignored or blurred. This is very different from the position of the Communist Party in *The British Road to Socialism*, where 'the grip of the ruling class over the various parts of the state apparatus' is clearly stated.[31] This traditional Marxist conception is not restated there out of dogmatism but as a result of the study of contemporary evidence which shows this still to be the case.

The authors of the present book rightly reject vulgar forms of 'Marxism' which reduce all political institutions to class essences and thereby crudely oversimplify and distort reality. Unfortunately however too many of them are throwing out vital organs of the Marxist baby with the dogmatic bathwater by abandoning or minimising the notion of the dialectical relationship between classes and politics. Such a conception belongs to the core of Marxism, unless Marxism — like power in Foucault's view — is denied any core, and is seen as an assortment of contradictory opinions on fundamental questions, some of which are demonstrably and diametrically opposed to those to which its founders attached the greatest importance. If their class conception of the state is abandoned, any analysis of democracy and its prospects is seriously impoverished, it seems to me, and is no more capable than traditional social democracy of dealing adequately with some of the most important problems confronting us in the struggle to expand democracy against a ruling class resorting to increasingly authoritarian methods.

There is certainly a pressing need for the creative development of Marxist political theory, and in no sphere more than that with which this book is concerned. However this can only be achieved by building on the foundations laid however incompletely by Marx and Engels, carefully studied at first hand and critically reappraised in the light of experience. It will not be advanced by ignoring or riding roughshod over them on a pale pink charger called 'Reconstructed Marxism', which turns out to be a gelding of dubious pedigree. □

[31] *The British Road to Socialism* (London 1978) p45.

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Discussion

The Politics of Cancer

Dave Forman

John Mathews' article 'The Politics of Cancer' (*Marxism Today* May 1981) performs a valuable function in highlighting some of the political implications of overcoming the problem of cancer. Like any other major social problem, cancer is a subject that cannot be left to experts to discuss. Although the scientific and medical professions have to make many and varied decisions about the research into and treatment of the disease, cancer is a problem for the whole community. The sheer size of the problem in terms of the number of people affected by cancer, the measures that are necessary to facilitate its prevention, and the allocation of sufficient financial resources to adequately investigate it, together produce an enormous number of political ramifications for society to deal with. However, in order for the general public to consider the problem realistically, and if necessary to take political action, it has to be well informed. Society has to be aware of the degree to which different types of cancer occur and the relative importance of the different causative factors. It has to know what the results of proposed preventative strategies are likely to be and the likely effectiveness of alternative political options.

In my view, Mathews' article is inadequate in these respects. By concentrating solely on cancer hazards in the workplace, Mathews places cancer in a completely false perspective which, in turn, leads to a rather narrow set of political conclusions. What I hope to explain below is that cancer has a multiplicity of causes and consequently a wide range of preventative strategies could be available to combat the disease. Each of these raises a different set of problems which have to be considered when dealing with the politics of cancer.

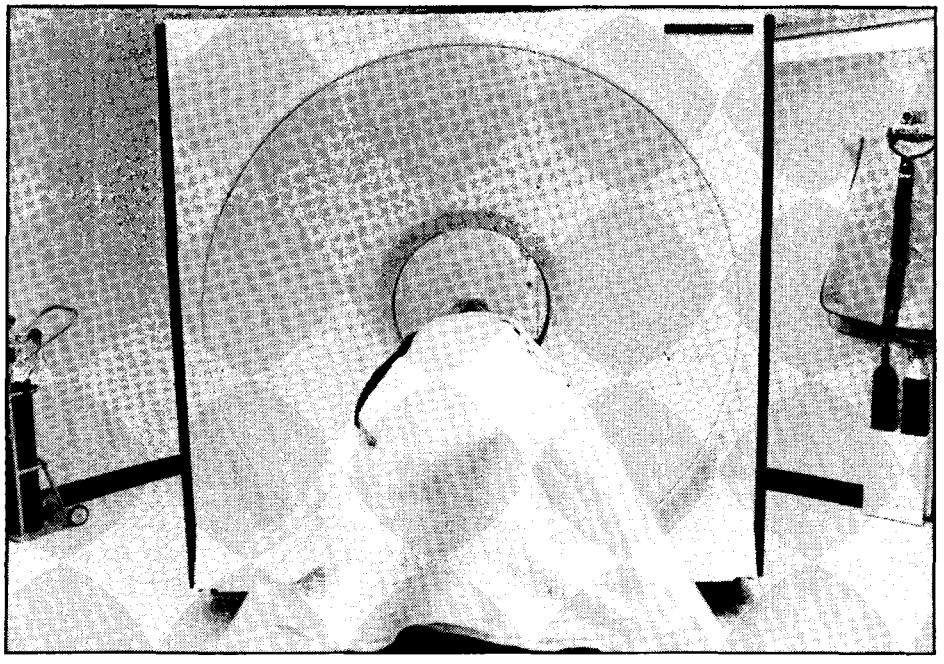
I would like to thank S Forman, J Devine and J Slack for suggesting improvements to this article.

The main argument

Mathews' main argument is that 'it [cancer] is a product . . . of industrial pollution in its widest sense. Control the pollution and the material basis of cancer will wither away'. This argument, which has a certain popularity at the moment, is based on three contentions: a) that cancer rates are increasing to an alarming level; b) that cancer incidence is linked with industrial activity; c) that 'the key to stopping cancer lies in the regulation of a handful of chemical and pharmaceutical cancer agents'.

This in many ways appears to be a very satisfying analysis. It presents a straightforward cause and effect relationship, it clearly indicates political objectives and it presents a relatively simple set of remedies to eradicate cancer. It is also unfortunately wrong. Not only is it wrong but it is dangerous. The danger arises through a completely false optimism engendered about the prospects for combating the disease. Mathews rightly exposes 'miracle cures' for cancer as unrealistic for the near future. However by suggesting that regulating a handful of industrial chemicals will cause cancer to wither away, he is himself propagating a miracle preventative strategy.

He is, of course, right to be concerned about the effects of such toxic chemicals not only on those who have to work with them, but also on the general public through pollution of the atmosphere. By enforcing adequate regulatory controls, exposure to such hazards could definitely be minimised and associated cancer rates reduced. However, it is totally unrealistic to suggest that this would be the single key to stopping cancer. There are many other factors which play a role in the causation of cancer, some of which have yet to be determined. Further, even when identified the elimination of such factors from the environment might not simply be a matter of legislation. As is now well known and will be amplified below, the cigarette is a major cause of cancer in our society. But changing people's smoking habits is not something which is easily accomplished. It could well be that several causes of cancer will be identified in the future which, like smoking, will require a change in lifestyle if they are to be avoided.



Lung cancer — the central problem

The main defect of Mathews' position can be seen by looking at the three main points outlined above. Firstly — is cancer on the increase? In terms of total deaths, the answer is decisively yes. Table 1 shows the death rate from cancer in England and Wales over the 40 year period from 1931 to 1971 and the figures show an overall increase of about 20%. However these figures are somewhat misleading as cancers of some parts of the body

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are increasing while those of other areas are remaining constant or even decreasing. If one looks at the pattern for individual cancers the situation is varied. Figure 1 shows the changes in mortality due to the 4 types of cancer that are the biggest killers. Together these four account for 3 out of every 5 cancer deaths. Over the period considered, stomach cancer has declined markedly, colon and breast cancer have remained roughly constant and there has been an enormous upsurge in cancer of the lung. In fact the increase in lung cancer accounts totally for the overall rise in cancer mortality over the last 50 years. If one breaks down Table 1 into lung cancers and non-lung cancers (Table 2) it can be seen that deaths from the latter have actually been decreasing. Exactly the same situation has been found in the USA and most other industrialised countries over the course of this century — a gigantic epidemic of lung cancer accounting totally for the net increase in deaths due to cancer.

Lung cancer has many complex and subtle causes. But the biggest factor is, without any shadow of doubt, smoking. Of the 35,000 people who die in Britain each year through lung cancer, 90% will be smokers. Since the introduction of the cigarette on a mass scale, lung cancer has changed from being a relatively insignificant cause of death to a major killer. Of course a proportion of lung cancer deaths will be due to factors other than smoking. However even these factors, of which asbestos is a good example, have a much more pronounced effect amongst smokers than non-smokers. In short, although one can talk, as Mathews does, about cancer being the epidemic of the twentieth century, it is evident that without smoking there would be no increase in cancer mortality.

Table 1

Cancer death rate in England and Wales for men and women between 45 and 64 years of age. Annual death rate per million population (age standardised) over each 5 year period.

1931-5	5,182
1941-5	5,241
1951-5	6,102
1961-5	6,222
1971-5	6,175

Note: It is generally thought that the 45-64 age group gives the best guide to prevailing trends in cancer mortality. Cancer in young people tends to be totally different in causation and nature from that in later life. Cancer in the over 65s has been inadequately diagnosed in the past and thus comparison of figures from different years is very inaccurate.

Table 2

Cancer death rates as in Table 1, divided into lung cancer and all other cancers.

	Lung Cancer	*All Other Cancers*
1931-5	349	4,833
1941-5	797	4,444
1951-5	1,665	4,437
1961-5	2,041	4,171
1971-5	2,048	4,127

Cancer and industrialisation

To turn now to the claim that cancer incidence is linked to industrial activity. As has just been pointed out, if one eliminates the effects of smoking, there is just no evidence that the vast increase in industrialisation in the twentieth century has led to an increase in cancer mortality. Certainly there have been several scandalous cases of cancer causing substances being used in industry with scant regard for their toxicity. Dozens of people have died as a result of exposure to such chemicals, deaths which could have been avoided. Such unnecessary loss of life is a tragedy of major proportions and there is absolutely no doubt that suggestions for screening chemicals for carcinogenicity, improving safety provisions, and reducing secrecy over industrial procedures must be fully supported and implemented. But the numbers who have developed cancer as a result of this sort of exposure are small. To put things in a rather gruesome perspective, John Mathews uses the example of vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) as an industrial carcinogen which caused several cancer deaths in the past, and over which a 'cover-up operation' was mounted. But the total number of people *ever* likely to have died as a result of such exposure is less than the number who die *each week* through smoking related cancers.

Mathews cites the US study which shows increased cancer levels in urban as opposed to rural areas of America. This cannot however be taken as evidence that it is the greater concentration of industry within cities that causes the extra risk of cancer. In some cases this is a possibility and it is likely that the American shipbuilding areas, where asbestos was used in a completely uncontrolled manner, fall into this category. But it also must be remembered that smoking levels and dietary habits are markedly different between town and country. When one corrects for this type of factor, the correlation between industrial areas and high cancer incidence is less well marked.

Further there are often alarming levels of cancer to be found in non industrial countries. Mozambique has the highest liver cancer rate in the world, while parts of Iran and China has astronomical levels of cancer of the throat. Both of these cancers are likely to be produced by dietary factors, in the first case as a result of mould growing on stored food and in the second probably as a result of preservation methods. These examples, and there are many others, give the lie to the widely held belief that cancer is not a problem for the Third World. Where such countries are still plagued by infectious diseases, people do not live long enough to go on to develop cancer (which, by and large, is a disease of old age). But, the fact that cancer can be associated with processes like food preservation, which may have been carried out in the same way for centuries, should alert one to the danger of viewing cancer as solely a product of 20th century Western society.

This type of narrowness of vision underlies Mathews' third point that 'the key to stopping cancer' lies in regulation of chemicals. I must emphasise that every measure which Mathews recommends in this respect is badly needed. However such regulations have to be put in perspective. Estimates from a number of sources, including the International Agency for Research on Cancer, have calculated that the present number of cancer related deaths could be brought down by something like 5-8% by adequate controls of industrial chemicals. This would prevent the premature deaths of about 10,000 people annually in England and Wales and would be a tremendous achievement. But it would *not* alter the position of cancer as the country's third biggest killer after heart and respiratory disease. In order to make further inroads on the cancer mortality figures, other aspects of life have to be considered.

Reduction in smoking

First and foremost amongst measures which would reduce the incidence of cancer, is the reduction in smoking. If smoking were eliminated so would nearly one third of all cancer deaths. If one also considers the fatalities smoking causes through heart and chest complaints, there are 100,000 people dying each year in this country through smoking related disease. At the present time no other single public health measure could so improve the quality of life in Britain as could a drastic cutting down in smoking. The political problems pertaining to smoking are manifold and there is only space here to mention them in outline. In my view, smoking raises questions that are a combination of traditional politics and politics that might best be described as 'personal'. In the former category are the campaigns to restrict the massive tobacco industry advertising and promotional activities. With a budget of £80

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million per annum (compared with one million spent by anti-smoking and health education organisations) there is no doubt that, despite health warnings, adverts create a social climate in which smoking is seen as acceptable and rational. From the government point of view, although the DHSS appears keen to back anti-smoking measures, there seems to be a Treasury reluctance to undergo the financial losses which a reduction in smoking might entail. Not only would tax revenue be cut back, but many more people would live to reach pensionable age, so that social service expenditure would also escalate dramatically.

Conventional and personal politics

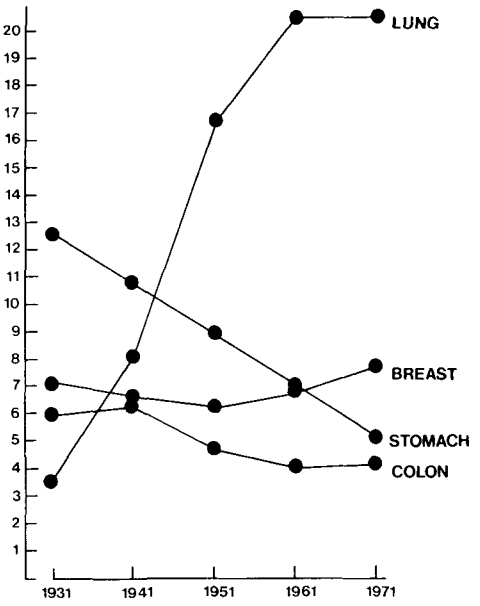
Although advertising plays a key role in the decision to start smoking (and once started — to keep on), so too does the influence of family, friends, and the general culture. In this respect, it is interesting to note that whereas the anti-smoking campaign has had a marked effect in intellectual and professional groups, amongst working class communities the level of smoking has remained constant. Additional pressures undoubtedly exist for a particular social group to start smoking — the unemployed, immigrants, and especially noticeable in recent years, women.[1] It is probably true to say that the most common response to stress in our society is to take out a cigarette. Most smokers seem to find it a relaxing and satisfying activity, perhaps even worth the consequences in later life. Thus tackling the problem of smoking requires, besides the elimination of advertising, the less tangible objective of persuading people to reorder their own personal priorities. It means essentially, people committing themselves to a healthier existence. There are obviously no discrete sets of rules available to bring this about but I am sure that the experience of the women's movement in developing self-help and mutual support groups would be of considerable relevance here.

Diet

The combination of 'conventional' and 'personal' political action is, I feel, likely to be essential for most cancer prevention strategies. After smoking, most researchers in the field think that dietary elements are the most important factors in the development of cancer. Unfortunately, it is not yet established what are the critical components in relation to cancer, in the Western diet. But the evidence that is gradually emerging shows that besides ensuring manufacturers adopt adequate standards in processing food, we will perhaps have to adjust our own diets and reduce our intake of certain foods. At the moment, there is no good proof that any food additives or factory preservation methods currently used in this country actually contribute to human cancer (and I include saccharin in this category). However, there have been flavouring, colouring, and preserving agents used in the past which have been shown to be highly carcinogenic. This is therefore a crucial area where food producers need to adequately describe all their additives and adopt absolute stringency in the testing procedures for them. This aside, there is now accumulating evidence that a wide range of foods themselves (ie, not artificial additions to them) have slight but significant effects on cancer. Although it is not possible to identify specific foods which should be absolutely avoided, it does seem that a healthy diet, ie, avoiding over-consumption and excess meat and fat, and ensuring an adequate consumption of fruit and vegetables, is genuinely likely to be protective against cancer.

Annual death rate per 10,000 population for common cancers

(Men and women between 45 and 64 years of age)



After smoking, diet, and occupational exposure there is a wide range of other more minor factors which are known to influence cancer and which conceivably could be controlled. Some of these have a well understood relationship to cancer causation and for these it is relatively easy to build up a list of things to avoid. Thus too much exposure to ultraviolet light, or X-rays, or (obviously) nuclear irradiation would be definitely unhealthy. There are also several drugs which can definitely induce cancer although they are essential for the treatment of other diseases. Hopefully these can be made less toxic or replaced in the near future. Other factors related to cancer have a much more obscure set of connections. For instance, it is known that mothers who have children early in life are less likely to develop breast cancer than those who give birth at a later age. Women who have several children are at less risk than those who have one or none. Such factors are probably related to hormonal influences, but it is unclear how they operate and, as yet, impossible to formulate a preventative strategy as a result. There is also evidence that certain forms of cancer are virally transmitted and control of the virus could eliminate the cancer.

A general strategy

In summary, cancer can be largely prevented. But cancer has a wide variety of causes and methods of prevention will be similarly diverse. It is not true to say that all the obstacles in the way of eliminating cancer are strictly economic. For some cancers, further medical and scientific advances will have to be made before one can specify what needs to be done for prevention. For other cancers there are undoubtedly problems that fall into the category of 'conventional' politics. These problems vary from ensuring that adequate government finance is available for fundamental research to challenging the power of those companies who make immense profits out of cancer causing substances. But to prevent cancer it will not be enough to wage campaigns against institutions and organisations. People will also have to make individual decisions about their own lifestyle. One can only go so far in blaming external forces, at a certain point you have to take responsibility for your own body. If one values health then it will be necessary to give up well formed habits that are often highly pleasurable. Chief among these is smoking, but in the future it may also be vital to modify one's diet, reduce exposure to sunlight, and maybe resist forms of non-essential medication. Without wishing to sound moralistic, it is important to realise that 'our bodies belong to ourselves'. Wherever industry or industrial products interfere with our bodies through pollution, dangerous work procedures, or persuading us to start smoking, then they have to be resisted by all political means. But politics also means at times changing ourselves, and as far as the politics of cancer is concerned this may be a matter of life or death. □

[1] For further details see B Jacobsen, *The Ladykillers* Pluto Press 1981.

Further Reading: J Cairns *Cancer, Science, and Society* W H Freeman 1978.

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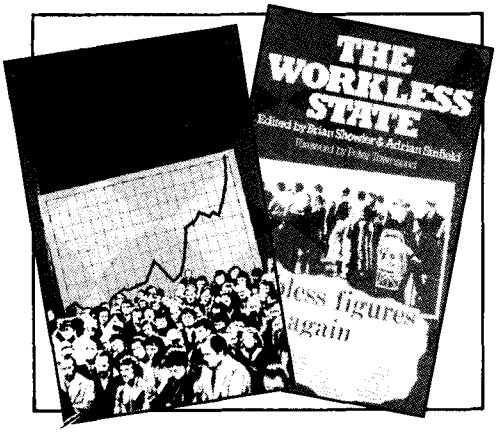
Reviews

WHAT UNEMPLOYMENT MEANS
Adrian Sinfield
Martin Robertson 1981 pb £2.75
ISBN 085520 406 0

THE WORKLESS STATE
Ed. Brian Showler & Adrian Sinfield
Martin Robertson 1981 pb £4.95
ISBN 085520 340 4



'We were dominated by the fear of unemployment. It was this which made us turn back against our own better judgement and try to spend our way out of unemployment, while relying on incomes policy to damp down the inflationary effects.' That was Keith Joseph in Preston on 5 September 1974 — the speech which marked the decisive turn towards monetarism in the Tory party. Underpinning the economic theory were the political judgements about the unemployed which were to become the hallmarks of Thatcherism and the New Right in Britain. A third of those out of work were unemployable, he claimed; a tenth were working on the quiet or onto some other fiddle. Many of the rest of the unemployed — then about 600,000 — were changing jobs.

From then on, the Tories progressively abandoned the principle of full employment, and it wasn't a manifesto commitment in the 1979 election. Yet ten, twenty, thirty years ago, such a low priority for employment policy would have been unthinkable. By shifting the political focus on to inflation, the Tories have established a buyer's market for jobs. And, at the same time, with the new fraud teams, and taxes on benefits and ending of Earnings Related Supplement on the way, they've tried to convince us that unemployment is all the fault of the unemployed.

Both these books try to understand the social implications of mass unemployment. Both show how unemployment has grown, how it is distributed across the country and across the workforce, its effects on individuals and communities, and how the services for the unemployed are, and in many cases aren't, operated. In addition, *The Workless State* attempts to provide the theoretical background — the economic analysis of unemployment, the change in political attitudes, and some international comparisons.

The books' common area is useful stuff. The huge numbers actually hide much deeper problems. Unskilled workers are usually the first to lose their jobs, and find it hardest to get back into work. It's progressively harder for the long-term unemployed to rejoin the job market, and they get more isolated, more depressed, and more poverty-stricken. Young people, with neither skills nor experience, suffer more than most. Unemployment among women has grown far faster than among men. And black workers are also far more likely to be jobless.

But while the books' treatment of the *experience* of unemployment is good — Adrian Sinfield started interviewing people out of work in the North East in 1963 — neither get much beyond that. Take the treatment of women's unemployment. Of course National Insurance contributions changes, and the surge of women on to the job market in the 60's and 70's, are reasons for the growth in women's work, and therefore the current women jobless. But neither book rates the *nature* of women's work as important. It's common currency amongst those writing about unemployment to point to the undercounting caused by women not registering, but the numbers aren't the end of the story. What kind of work do women do? How should women's work — and therefore worklessness — be defined? How can Thatcherist ideas about a woman's place be challenged? These questions deserve better treatment.

Another glaring failure in both books is the lack of discussion of immigration and imperialism. The chapter 'Unemployment in International Perspective' in *The Workless State* is nothing much more than a comparison of the numbers out of work in the major capitalist countries. Useful, perhaps, but it goes no way towards explaining the predatory relationship between these countries and their labour markets, from the days of slavery to the gastarbeiters in Germany, the wetbacks in the USA, and the black immigration to the UK. And, just as important, without such an explanation, there can be no understanding of the institutionalised racism of the current labour market.

'Political Economy and Unemployment' is also patchy. The section on the macroeconomic effects of unemployment — in terms of tax take, benefit and administrative costs, and foregone production — is good. But the theoretical analysis of both monetarism and Keynesianism is weak. There's no discussion of the actual mechanisms of monetarism — exchange and interest rates, exchange controls, government cuts — and the way they act to discipline the workforce. Nor is there any distinction drawn between reflation of demand, and the much more important emphasis that Keynes put on public investment in capital goods.

On the other hand, Alan Deacon's chapter on the change in political attitudes is one of the best in either book. He shows very clearly how central employment policy was the post-war governments, and how the shift to the obsessive fear of inflation came about. Most interesting of all, perhaps, are the references to some of Beveridge's ideas in *Full Employment in a Free Society* (1944). Beveridge stressed that it wasn't just the brute number of jobs that was at issue, but also the quality of the work, and the choice that workers should be able to have. Linked to these ideas are the crucial social choices about who works and when. As education lengthens, and the retirement age comes down, the definitions of workers and the unemployed are bound to change, and clearly these issues will grow in importance as technological change accelerates.

A final failing of both books must be pointed out. Neither takes any time to discuss trade union reactions to unemployment. Certainly trade unions have been slow to translate conference policy into strategies to deal with unemployment. But the growth of Unemployed Workers Centres is surely a significant political development, because, while they're closely linked to the labour movement, they offer the opportunity for the unemployed not only to escape their isolation, but also to organise collectively. With unemployment at even the official, understated level of 2½ million, that's got to be important.

Peter Higgins

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TOWARDS SOCIALIST WELFARE WORK
Steve Bolger, Paul Corrigan, Jan Docking and Nick Frost
Macmillan 1981 pb £3.95
ISBN 0 33289 06 04

The four authors of this book set out to explore the limits and possibilities for socialists of 'progressive' work within the welfare state, and to offer practical suggestions to social workers on how to develop a socialist perspective within their work. These ideas are developed through a detailed consideration of major issues in contemporary social work — the implementation of the Seebohm Report, child care decisions and community work. In particular, the concepts of contradiction, democratisation and collective work are central to the authors' discussion of each of these.

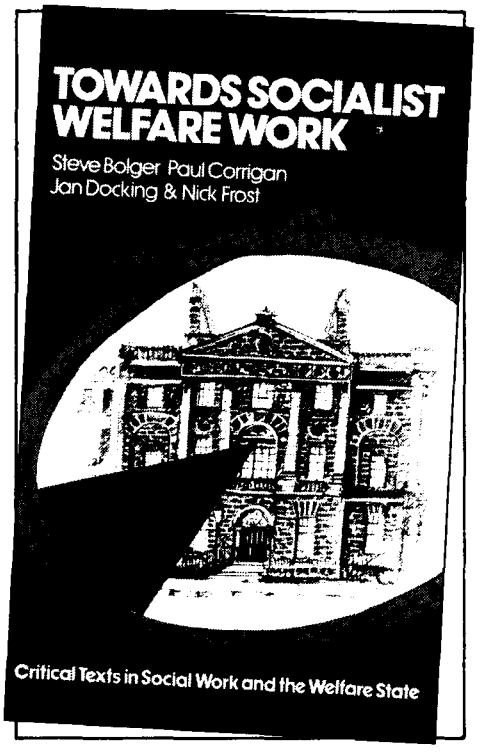
Books which address the relationship between theory and practice in Marxism run into formidable difficulties; but there is much to be said in favour of the approach adopted here. The authors develop their arguments with a refreshing openness and lack of dogma. Marxism is not treated as a body of truths which yield definitive answers, and the problems raised by the book are clearly left open for further discussion.

The book continues and develops recent debates on the Left about 'Thatcherism', and the political and ideological conditions which gave rise to it. Three 'ideologies of welfare' are distinguished — Thatcherism, social democracy and democratic socialism. The authors argue that welfare services, despite the onset of Thatcherism, still remain overwhelmingly the terrain of social democracy: it is this which makes the welfare state a particularly important arena of struggle for socialists. Social democratic institutions are caught within a contradiction — the need to provide services based on *needs*, without challenging the limits or requirements of capitalism. They offer 'room to manoeuvre' to socialists — a political space to be defended and utilised.

The book also predicts that welfare services will remain social democratic territory for the forseeable future because people 'still expect some major welfare interventions in their lives.' Perhaps; but there is no room for complacency, particularly in the personal social services. It is an argument which sits uneasily alongside the failure of many campaigns to defend public services. The private and voluntary sectors are already seen by many as efficient providers of welfare.

The case studies of social work practice are interesting and throughtful, and strike a reasonable balance between particular experiences and the more general implications which may be drawn out of them. The discussion of child-care decisions is perhaps the least satisfactory, but also the most challenging, since it tackles a subject about which socialists have had very little to say. The contradiction between the 'care' and 'control' functions of the social worker is explored, as is the absence of any real involvement of children in decisions about their own future. Social workers are urged to forge links with organisations representing children, and to encourage young people to organise collectively in their own interests. These proposals seem less convincing and less practical than those offered elsewhere in the book, but clearly the statutory duties under which the social worker operates in the field of child care are far more limiting than those in (for example) community work. For this reason alone it may be difficult to generate a practical yet imaginitive socialist practice.

The theoretical framework of the book is a familiar overview of Britain's economic crisis and the restructuring of the state, in which


TOWARDS SOCIALIST WELFARE WORK
Steve Bolger Paul Corrigan
Jan Docking & Nick Frost
Critical Texts in Social Work and the Welfare State

the link with actual social work practice is often made only tenuously. The 'room for manoeuvre' which the welfare state offers to socialists is primarily an effect of social democratic ideology and the relationship of this to economic problems remains unclear. On the other hand, if an overview of the economic context is indispensible for understanding the potential of social work, it would be interesting to consider what (if any) are the economic preconditions of *socialist* welfare work. At no point do the authors consider to what extent their proposals depend upon the implementation of an alternative economic strategy, or whether they need to be developed as part of an 'alternative social policy'. Nevertheless, the chapters on social work are still of considerable value in their own right.

A central theme of this book is the need for democratisation, and the belief that socialist welfare work requires greater community involvement in the control and administration of services. Socialists in welfare must forge links with the community, with trades unions, and with other organisations, and develop collective styles of work which displace individuals and families as the source of social problems. Experiences drawn from the 1978-9 social workers' strike and the Community Development Projects are used to support this view. At present, whilst the *content* of welfare services is often seen as desirable and necessary, the *form* in which they are administered is experienced by clients as bureaucratic and oppressive.

Clearly these arguments have some force: struggles over the *form* in which services are delivered may well become crucial in a period when instinctive demands to 'restore the cuts' often seem unrealistic. However, much recent discussion of democracy has rested on an assumption that the democratisation of (for example) welfare services is the 'key' to regaining popular support for social provision, to winning people to the defence of public services, and to rolling back the tide of Thatcherism. Similarly, in this book, the authors see democratisation as the central thrust of socialist welfare work.

Undoubtedly some form of democratic control would be essential to socialist welfare services; but there is no guarantee that moves to democratise services are themselves synonymous with progressive social policies. It is this relationship between democracy and socialism which the authors fail to explore. They claim that social democrats do not believe that working class communities are capable of running their own services, and that this reflects 'a more fundamental fear that the working class is racist, sexist and individualist and does not actually want the services that are being imposed on it!' However, the authors have less to say about the possible effects of racism, sexism and individualism within more *democratically* administered services. Perhaps the problems wither away?

The book is at pains to point out that the involvement of public sector trade unions in the defence of social services will not lead automatically to progressive welfare policies. However, this argument needs to be pushed

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much further. Socialist politics will not necessarily emerge from *any* particuilar organisational form. The struggle for progressive social policies is one which must be won *in addition to* the fight for democratic control. A renewed concern for the form which services take ought not to lead us to disregard their content, nor to see the latter as a simple effect of the former. As the authors themselves observe, in their discussion of the 1969 Children & Young Persons Act, 'progressive' legislation has not always had its roots in democratic struggle. This complex and contingent relationship between democratic structures and democratic socialism needs to be explored far more carefully. Greater democracy alone will not win all the ideological battles: at best, it will offer a more encouraging arena in which to struggle for socialist ideas.

Mike Potter

NOTES

POLICING IN THE EIGHTIES

Philip Thomas writes: The changing nature of policing in the past decade has become a major area of public debate. In many sections of the community it is now open to question whether the police operate with the 'consent' of the policed.

The police are now under more sustained public criticism than at any other time during the post-war period. At the same time senior police officers have taken the unprecedented step of making public statements on politically contentious matters, such as public order, criminal procedure and 'subversion'.

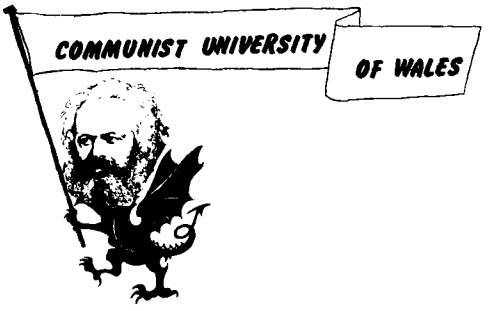
The *British Journal of law and Society* in conjunction with the Faculty of Law at University College, Cardiff, is to hold a critical conference on police and the community at Cardiff University, from September 25-28.

The conference will bring together activists, academics, researchers, journalists, trade unionists and people from community groups to examine the extent and effect of these changes on policing in the 1980s

Special arrangements for registration and free accomodation are available to those who are not supported by an institution or organisation. For information contact Penny Smith, Faculty of Law, University College, Cardiff, Tel. 0222-44211 ext. 2369. Anyone interested in organising a workshop should contact Philip Thomas at the Faculty of Law.

COMMUNIST UNIVERSITY OF WALES

Kevin Littlewood writes: Britain now faces its worst crisis since the 1930s: mass unemployment, industrial closures, the break-up of the welfare state, increasing poverty and social violence and the building of nuclear weapons for mass destruction. But 1981 has also seen the development of the fightback against these trends. The revival of the Left is apparent in the success of the People's March For Jobs, in the rapid growth of the peace movement, in the battle for socialist policies within the Labour Party, and in other campaigns unifying a wide cross-section of society in a common cause.



Wales and the present crisis is the theme of the Communist University of Wales (CUW) to be held at Cardiff University from October 23-25. Under this general theme CUW will attempt to bring together the theory and practice growing out of these new initiatives on the Left and to suggest future possibilities for the broad movement. The weekend will consist of lectures and study sessions, discussion and entertainment and speakers will include Bob Rowthorn, Gwyn Williams and Bert Pearce. For further details contact Kevin Littlewood, CUW, c/o 4 Tudor St, Cardiff.

THE STENCILLED PAPER GROUP

Andrew Goodwin writes: The publishing efforts of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies are not limited to the recent book *Unpopular Education* (CCCS Education Group, Hutchinson 1981). Readers may be interested in the series of Stencilled Papers available from the Centre. There are over sixty titles, covering the media, subcultures, popular culture, feminism, race, historiography, work, and cultural theory.

Recent additions to the series include *The Cultural Study of Music* (Dick Bradley), *On the Political Economy of Black Labour* (Andy Green), *Femininity and Consumption in Women's Magazines* (Janice Winship) and *Fads and Fashions* (Chas Critcher *et al.*) The papers cost around 40p—70p. For a detailed list and order form send an SAE to: Stencilled Papers, CCCS, Arts Faculty, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT.

Contributions to Notes (brief please) are welcome. We need copy by the 1st of the month preceding publication.

SOCIALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TIMES OF CRISIS
(19th-20th Centuries)
Conference at Portsmouth Polytechnic 18-20 September 1981

Second conference of the British Research Group on Socialism and Nationalism. Papers by historians and social scientists will focus on the relationship between socialist and working class movements and the nation, as well as on the political uses of nationalism in times of war, civil strife and revolution.

Proceedings of the groups first Portsmouth conference (1977) now available: E Cahm and V C Fisera (eds), *Socialism and Nationalism*, 3 vols. Spokesman Books 1978-80.

Inclusive conference charge, £35 full board. Assistance may be available for postgraduate students and the unemployed.

Enquiries and bookings to: Conference on Socialism and Nationalism, School of Languages and Area Studies, Portsmouth Polytechnic, Wiltshire Building, Hampshire Terrace, Portsmouth PO1 2BU.
Telephone: Portsmouth (STD 0705) 27681, ext 215.

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New in Bulgaria

Summer holidays by air are available for the first time to British visitors on a fine beach at Kamchiya just south of Varna. This large resort is run by *Pirin* the trade union country club for Bulgarians, as well as foreign visitors, and includes new hotels and motels, extensive sports facilities and boating on the Kamchiya river, a miniature Danube delta. The hotel is of a good first B Grade, all rooms have private bath and WC and vouchers valued at 11 levas a day provide copious meals at a wide choice of restaurants. The medieval city and port of Varna (18km) is reached by regular local buses. Many excursions are available and on certain dates a 7-day coach tour of Veliko Turnovo, Shipka, Plovdiv and Central Bulgaria can be combined with a week at the resort.
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